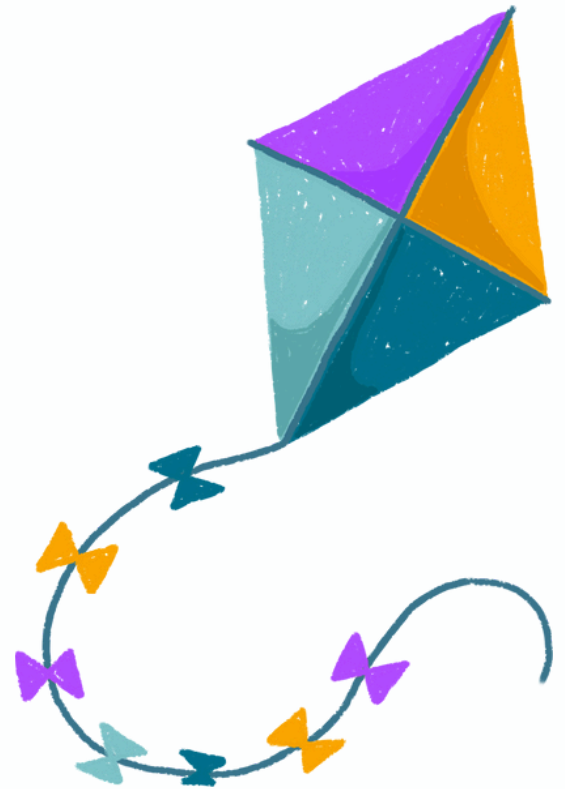




NETWORK TO
ELIMINATE
VIOLENCE IN
RELATIONSHIPS



PROJECT YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

**Designed for the use of children and youth
between 10 and 18 years old**

Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Community Services Recovery Fund

Canada 

About Project Youth Violence Intervention and Prevention

This Project is a resource designed to provide awareness and information on what is a healthy relationship and how to maintain one, how best to recognize the signs of relationship violence, how to safely respond to that violence and how to support someone experiencing violence. It is intended to be a practical guide for children and youth between 10 and 18 years old. This project is meant to inspire you to safely get involved if you see violence and become active agents against any form of relationship violence.

Please note that these symbols signal external links, that is to say, by clicking on them you will be guided to external materials:

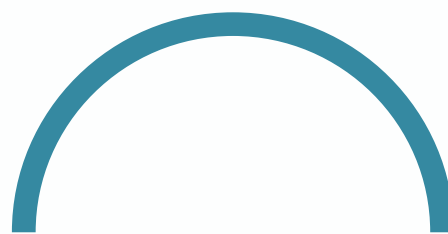
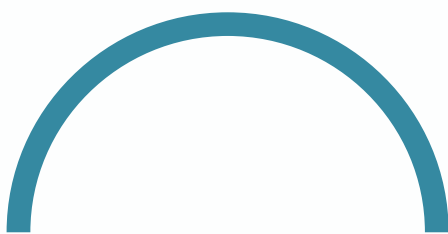


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Chapter 1

Healthy Relationships



Objectives

By the end of first chapter, you will be able to:

1. Recall the key characteristics of healthy relationships.
2. Explain the importance of consensual and healthy relationships in your lives.
3. Demonstrate the ability to identify non-verbal signs that someone may not be giving consent.
4. Analyze scenarios to determine if boundaries are being respected and how to assert your own boundaries.
5. Assess the characteristics of your own relationships to determine if they are healthy.
6. Develop strategies for building and maintaining healthy relationships in your lives.

What is a Healthy Relationship?

A healthy relationship is like a cozy blanket on a chilly day—it wraps you up in warmth and comfort, making you feel safe and understood. In a healthy relationship, both people support each other, respect each other's boundaries, and communicate openly and honestly. It's like having a best friend who's also your biggest cheerleader, someone who celebrates your successes and helps you through tough times. Just like a plant needs sunlight and water to grow, a healthy relationship needs trust, kindness, and understanding to thrive. So, if you ever find yourself in a relationship where you feel happy, respected, and valued, you're probably in a healthy one!

People in a Healthy Relationship...

Treat each other with respect

Listen to each other

**Talk to each other openly and
honestly**

**Say good things about each
other**

**Enjoy spending time with each
other**

Trust each other

Respect each other's boundaries

Can set boundaries without any fear

Everything is consensual



An Important Part of Every Healthy Relationship: Consent

Consent is like a magic word in any relationship—it's the key to making sure everyone feels comfortable and respected. Consent means that both people agree to what's happening, whether it's holding hands, sharing personal information, or anything else. It's like asking someone if they want to play a game before diving into it together. In a healthy relationship, consent is always given freely and enthusiastically, without any pressure or coercion. It's about listening to each other and honoring each other's boundaries. Just like you wouldn't want someone to take your phone without asking, it's important to always ask for and receive consent before doing anything that involves someone else. So, remember, when it comes to consent, always ask first and respect each other's choices!

No Means No, but other things may mean no as well!

Sometimes, "no" isn't just a word—it can also be a silent feeling. Just like how a closed door means you can't come in, a lack of a clear "yes" in a relationship can also mean "no." It's important to pay attention to more than just words; body language, facial expressions, and other cues can all speak volumes. If someone seems unsure or uncomfortable, it's crucial to pause and check in with them. Remember, true consent is enthusiastic and freely given. So, always make sure you have a clear and enthusiastic "yes" before moving forward in any situation.



Non-verbal signs that someone may not be consenting or may not want to engage in something can include:

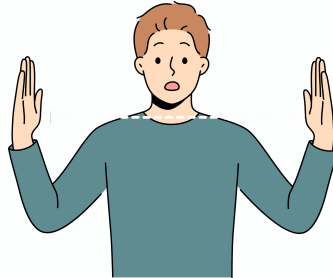
- Pulling away or trying to create physical distance.
- Avoiding eye contact.
- Stiffening or tensing up.
- Pushing the other person away.
- Turning away or trying to leave the situation.
- Freezing or appearing scared or uncomfortable.
- Expressing discomfort through facial expressions, such as frowning or grimacing.
- Crossing arms or legs in a defensive posture.
- Not responding to advances or ignoring the other person's cues.
- Crying or looking upset.
- Showing signs of distress, such as shaking or trembling.



It's important to always respect these non-verbal signals and to seek explicit verbal consent!



Setting Boundaries



Setting boundaries is like drawing lines on a map—it defines where you begin and where others end. Just like how you wouldn't want someone barging into your room without permission, boundaries in relationships are about deciding what's okay and what's not okay for you. It's important to communicate your boundaries clearly and respectfully, whether it's about personal space, time, or behavior. Boundaries help create a safe and respectful environment where everyone feels comfortable and valued. So, don't be afraid to speak up and assert your boundaries, because they're essential for healthy relationships!



How to Set Boundaries

- ⇒ Take some time to think about what makes you feel comfortable and what doesn't. This can help you identify areas where you might need to set boundaries.
- ⇒ Be direct and specific about what you need. Use "I" statements to express your feelings and avoid blaming or criticizing the other person.
- ⇒ Setting boundaries can feel challenging at first, so it's okay to start with small boundaries and gradually work your way up to bigger ones.
- ⇒ Once you've set a boundary, stick to it. Consistency is key to establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries.
- ⇒ Taking care of yourself is essential for setting and maintaining boundaries. Your needs and well-being are important, and you deserve to have your values and boundaries respected. It's also important to consider that you are part of a family and community, and we need to respect their values and philosophies too. For example, if your family values spending quality time together, you might need to set boundaries around how much time you spend on your phone or computer. Or, if your school has rules about behavior, you might need to ensure you are following those rules even if your friends are doing something different. Balancing your own needs with the expectations of your family and community can help you navigate relationships and responsibilities more effectively.
- ⇒ If you're struggling to set boundaries, don't hesitate to reach out to friends, family, teachers, or a therapist for support and guidance.



Successful Instances of Setting Boundaries



Aarya and Alex are friends who often study together at the library. One day, Alex asks Aarya if they can study together at Aarya's house instead of the library. Aarya feels uncomfortable studying at her house with someone else, so she tells Alex, "I prefer to keep our study sessions at the library because I like having a quiet, public space to focus." Alex respects Aarya's boundary and agrees to continue studying at the library.



Sarah has been feeling overwhelmed with schoolwork and extracurricular activities. Her friend, Soren, keeps pressuring her to skip her study sessions and go out with him instead, even though Sarah has told him she needs to focus on her grades. Sarah decides to set a boundary with Soren and says, "I really appreciate our friendship, but I need to prioritize my studies right now. If you continue to pressure me to skip studying to hang out, I will need to take a break from our friendship for a little while to focus on my own well-being." Soren continues to pressure Sarah, so she follows through with her boundary and takes a break from their friendship until he respects her priorities.



During a group project, Amir notices that his classmate, Jess, often texts him late at night with questions about the project. While Amir wants to be helpful, he feels uncomfortable responding to messages late at night. Amir decides to set a boundary and tells Jess, "I'm happy to help with the project, but I prefer not to text late at night. Can we try to discuss project questions during the day instead?" Jess respects Amir's boundary and agrees to limit their communication to daytime hours.



Exercises for Setting Boundaries

- Take some time to reflect on your personal boundaries in different areas of your life, such as school, work, relationships, and self-care. Write down what is important to you and where you feel comfortable or uncomfortable.
- Practice setting boundaries in front of a mirror or by writing a script. This can help you become more comfortable with asserting yourself and saying no when needed.
- Close your eyes and imagine a situation where you need to set a boundary. Picture yourself confidently and assertively expressing your boundary. Visualizing can help you feel more prepared for real-life situations.
- Write down some boundary-setting statements that feel authentic to you, such as "I'm not comfortable with that," or "I need some space right now." Practice saying these statements out loud to yourself.
- Keep a journal and write about situations where you felt your boundaries were crossed and how it made you feel. Then, write about how you could have set a boundary in that situation and how it might have changed the outcome. This can help you be prepared if you need to set a boundary with someone in the future!

How Do I Set Boundaries with People Older Than Me?



Setting boundaries with parents, teachers, and essentially anyone older than us can feel intimidating, but it's an important skill to have. Remember, setting boundaries is a sign of self-respect and is essential for maintaining healthy relationships and protecting your own well-being.

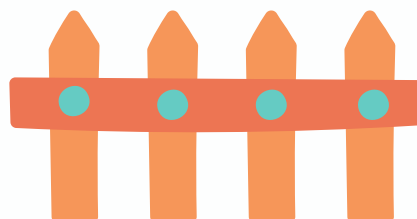
Reflect on what makes you feel comfortable and uncomfortable in interactions with your parents, teachers, and what have you. This self-awareness will help you identify where you need to set boundaries.

When communicating your boundaries to adults, be direct and assertive while remaining respectful. Don't forget to use "I" statements such as "I need ..." or "I feel ..." instead of blaming language such as "you always..." .

Find a quiet and private moment to discuss your boundaries with them. This will help ensure that they can focus on what you're saying and give you their full attention. Also, don't have this conversation if they are agitated about something else! Find a time when they are calm and have capacity to listen and accept.

And remember: some people may not initially respect your boundaries, but it's important to stand firm. Stay calm and assertive, and reiterate your boundaries as needed while respectfully explaining your reasons.

If you're having difficulty setting boundaries, don't hesitate to seek support from a trusted friend, family member, or counselor. They can offer advice and help you navigate the situation.





Example of Setting Boundaries with Older People

Your aunt often criticizes your lifestyle choices and tries to control aspects of your life, such as how you dress or spend your free time. While you love and respect them, their behavior makes you feel frustrated and misunderstood. To set a boundary, in a calm and respectful manner, you could explain to your aunt how their actions make you feel. For example, you could say, "I really appreciate your concern for me, but I feel upset when you criticize my choices. I would like it if we could talk about these things without judgment." If the behavior continues, you may need to set a consequence to reinforce your boundary. For instance, you could say, "If we can't discuss these things without arguing, I may need to take a break from our conversations for a while until we can talk more respectfully to each other."



Seek Support!



Talk to a trusted adult or counselor about your boundaries and how you can assert them with others. They can provide guidance and support as you practice setting boundaries with adults.

Recognizing the Boundaries of Others

Recognizing the boundaries of others is an essential aspect of building respectful and healthy relationships. It's like reading the signs on a road—understanding where it's okay to go and where it's not. Paying attention to verbal and non-verbal cues allows us to understand when someone is comfortable or uncomfortable with a situation. Respect for boundaries means honoring someone's personal space, emotions, and autonomy. It's important to listen actively, ask for consent, and be mindful of crossing lines that someone has clearly set. By acknowledging and respecting the boundaries of others, we create an environment of trust, safety, and mutual respect in our relationships for ourselves and everybody else.





Examples of Recognizing the Boundaries of Others

- You are at a party with friends, and you notice that one of your friends seems uncomfortable when your group starts discussing a sensitive topic. You want to respect your friend's boundaries and ensure they feel safe and comfortable. You approach your friend and quietly ask if they are okay or if they need a break from the conversation. Your friend expresses appreciation for your concern and decides to step away for a moment to collect their thoughts. By recognizing and respecting your friend's boundaries, you not only show empathy and support but also help create a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone at the party.
- You and your friend have been close for years, and you often turn to each other for support. However, recently your friend has been going through a tough time and needs space to deal with their emotions. You have been reaching out to them more frequently to check in, but they have not been as responsive as usual. Your friend reaches out to you and says, "I appreciate your support, but I need some space to process everything that has been happening. I may not be as available as usual for a while." You respect your friend's boundary and give them the space they need. You realize that while you want to be there for them, it is important to respect their needs and feelings. This helps strengthen your friendship by showing that you can support each other even when it means respecting boundaries.
- You are in a group project at school, and one of your classmates has been quiet and withdrawn during meetings. You notice that they seem uncomfortable when the group assigns them a task that involves public speaking. Instead of assuming they are okay with the task, you approach them privately and ask if public speaking is something they are comfortable with. They admit that they have anxiety about speaking in front of groups. By recognizing your classmate's discomfort and respecting their boundaries, you are able to find a solution that works for everyone. This helps build trust and collaboration within your group.

Exercises to help you be more mindful of others' boundaries:

- Pay attention to non-verbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, to see how someone might be feeling in different situations. Practice noticing when someone seems uncomfortable or withdrawn. Not everyone is able to communicate clearly their lack of consent or their boundaries, but you still want to be respectful and thoughtful and do what is right.
- Create role-playing scenarios with a friend where you practice recognizing and respecting each other's boundaries. This can help you become more attuned to the signals others give off. You will also get better at hearing “no” and accepting it.
- Practice active listening by focusing on what the other person is saying without interrupting or thinking about your response. This can help you better understand their perspective and boundaries.
- Keep a journal and write about interactions where you may have crossed someone's boundaries or where you successfully recognized and respected them. Reflect on what you could have done differently in those situations.
- Ask friends or family members for feedback on how well you recognize and respect their boundaries. Use their input to improve your boundary recognition skills.

Communication Matters

Open dialogue about feelings, needs, and concerns is the cornerstone of strong and meaningful relationships. In these conversations, we share our emotions, worries, and vulnerabilities without fear of judgment or criticism. It's about creating a safe space where everyone feels heard, understood, and supported.

By openly discussing feelings and concerns, we build trust, deepen connections, and foster empathy and compassion for one another. These dialogues enable us to navigate challenges, resolve conflicts, and strengthen our bonds. Ultimately, open dialogue cultivates a culture of openness, understanding, and emotional intimacy in our relationships, enriching our lives in profound ways.

Imagine you and your friend are having a conversation about a problem you're facing. In an open dialogue, both of you would actively listen to each other, showing empathy and understanding. You would feel comfortable expressing your feelings and needs, knowing that your friend is genuinely interested in what you have to say. Your friend, in turn, would share their own feelings and needs, creating a safe space for open and honest communication. Throughout the conversation, there would be no judgment or criticism and no fear or distrust, only support and mutual respect. This kind of dialogue helps strengthen your friendship and builds trust, as you both feel valued and heard.

My Relationship Rights

1. Express my opinions and have them respected
2. Change my mind
3. Choose if and when I want to have sexual activity or to use safer sex practices
4. Have my needs be as important as others' needs
5. Not be emotionally, physically, or sexually abused
6. Choose to stop having sexual activity at any time
7. Choose my friends and/or partner(s) without discrimination or pressure from others
8. Fall out of love or end a friendship and/or a relationship without fear of negative repercussions and/or violence
9. Set clear boundaries that are respected
10. Say no

My Relationship Responsibilities

1. Listen actively to the other person/s' opinions and show respect, even if you disagree. Practice open communication and try to understand their perspective.
2. Acknowledge and respect other people's right to change their mind about decisions or plans.
3. Respect your partner's choice regarding sexual activity and consent. Always prioritize their comfort and boundaries.
4. Recognize that other people around you have needs that are as important as your own. Strive to find a balance that meets both your needs and theirs.
5. Ensure that your actions are not emotionally, physically, sexually, or in any other way abusive. Treat people with kindness and respect at all times.
6. Honor other's right to take back their consent at any time. Always obtain clear and enthusiastic consent.
7. Acknowledge others' right to end a relationship or friendship with you without fear of retaliation or violence.
8. Understand and respect your others' boundaries. Avoid pushing them to do things they are not comfortable with.
9. Accept others' decision if they say no to something, whether it's a request for a favor or an invitation.

My Legal Rights and Obligations



It is also important to know your legal rights as a human being, what you are entitled to, and why you should advocate for your rights. You have legal rights that are designed to protect your well-being and ensure your safety. These rights include the right to be protected from harm, abuse, and exploitation. You also have the right to education, healthcare, and a standard of living that is adequate for your physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development. Additionally, you have the right to express your views and have them respected and taken into account in matters that affect you, as well as the right to privacy and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.



To have a better understanding of your rights as a person under the age of 18, please view [here!](#)

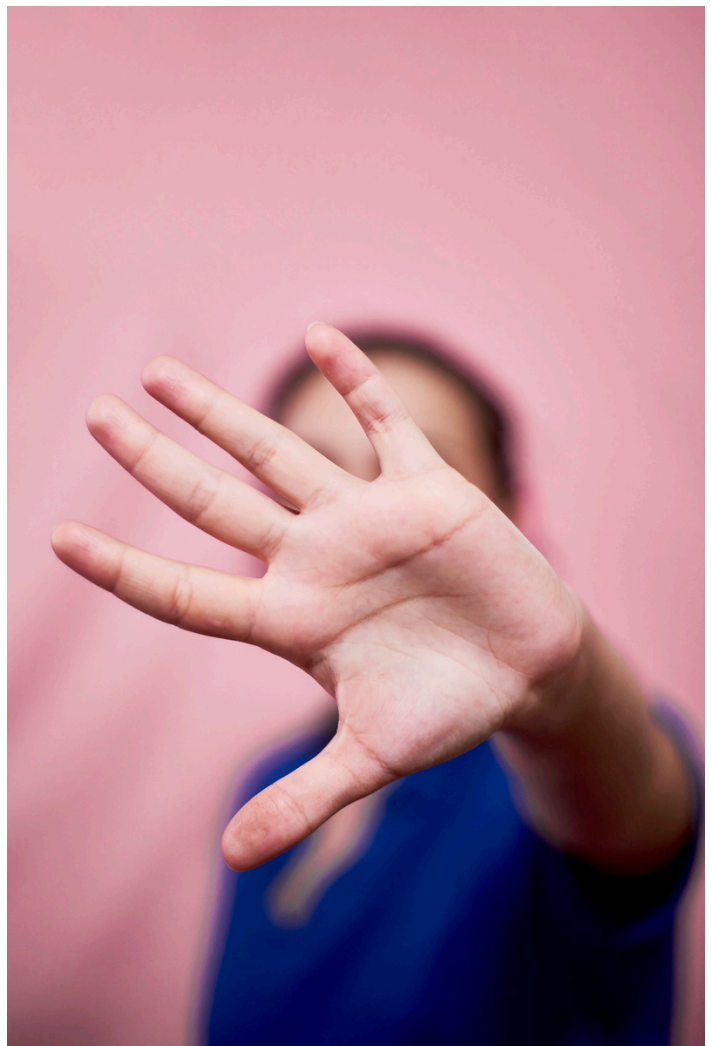
You should also be aware of your legal responsibilities and understand what actions are considered criminal. Visit the following website to learn more about what constitutes a crime. It's important to note that youth can also commit crimes and may face legal consequences, including involvement in the youth justice system.



Check out [here](#) to gain more knowledge about what actions are considered criminal!

Chapter 2

Relationship Violence



Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Recall the characteristics of unhealthy and violent relationships.
2. Explain the different forms of relationship violence and what they have or have not in common.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the cycle of abuse in relationships with imaginary scenarios.
4. Examine the impact of societal norms and values on individuals' vulnerability to violence through discussions.
5. Assess statistics related to relationship violence to increase awareness and understanding of how violence disproportionately affects different individuals with different identities.
6. Develop strategies to recognize and address unhealthy relationship dynamics.

What Is Relationship Violence?

Relationship violence (RV) is any form of physical, emotional, spiritual and financial abuse, negative social control or coercion that is suffered by anyone that has a bond or a relationship with the offender. As a complex and multifaceted issue, RV can happen at any age, across gender, ethnicity, social and economic status. RV is also known by many other terms which include, but it is not limited to, intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence, neglect, dating violence, family violence, battery, child neglect and child abuse, bullying and cyberbullying, seniors or elder abuse, male violence, sextortion, and stalking. RV is considered a serious crime that affects millions of people in Canada; however, appropriate practices and policies can prevent it.



DIFFERENT FORMS OF RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

Make sure to check out the links for more information!

Physical: Physical violence means hurting someone on purpose. This can cause physical pain or injury that may last a long time. For example, hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, pushing, choking, throwing objects, using a weapon to harm someone, hurting pets, destroying property, etc. are all acts of physical violence.



Emotional: Emotional violence is when someone uses words or actions to control, scare, or isolate another person, or to make them feel bad about themselves. An example of emotional violence is when someone constantly puts you down, criticizes you, or makes you feel worthless. This can be done through hurtful words, insults, or manipulative behavior that undermines your self-esteem and makes you doubt yourself. Emotional violence can also involve threats, intimidation, or isolating you from friends and family to control you. It can also be done by excluding you from activities or by isolating you.



Sexual: Sexual violence is when someone touches you in any way or performs sexual acts on you without your permission. It can also happen when someone continues the sexual act even after you've told them to stop, or if they make you engage in sexual acts that are unsafe or embarrassing to you.



Financial: Financial abuse is when someone uses money or property to control or take advantage of another person. An example of financial abuse is when someone controls all the money in a relationship and refuses to let the other person access it. They might also force the other person to give them money or use their credit cards without permission, leaving the victim without the means to support themselves or make their own financial decisions. It may be that they make you buy them lunch or pay for their entertainment.



Neglect: Neglect is when someone who is supposed to take care of you doesn't provide you with things you need to stay healthy and safe. An example of neglect is when a caregiver doesn't give a child enough food to eat, doesn't provide them with proper clothing or shelter, or doesn't take them to the doctor when they are sick or injured.

Cyberbullying and Sextortion: Cyberbullying is when someone uses the internet or technology, like smartphones or social media, to embarrass, hurt, mock, threaten, or be mean to someone else online. Sextortion is a form of blackmail where someone threatens to distribute intimate images or videos of another person unless they provide them with more explicit and sexual material, money, or other forms of compensation. It can also involve threats to harm the victim or their loved ones if they do not comply with the demands. Sextortion is a serious crime that can have severe emotional and psychological consequences for the victim.



Harassment: Harassment refers to behavior that involves repeatedly following, communicating with, or watching over someone in a way that makes them feel threatened, intimidated, or unsafe. It can involve sending frequent texts or repeatedly asking for your location, ranging from every few minutes to several times per day.

Bullying: Bullying is emotional and physical abuse. It is when someone repeatedly behaves aggressively and intentionally hurts or harms another person to have power over them. Example is when someone spreads the word that you are not to be trusted or states they are going to beat you up if you tell anyone what you saw.

Negative Social Control: Negative social control is when rules and expectations from society or family limit a person's freedom and rights. An example may be that the family does not want you to engage in a romantic relationship. It can be negative control if you do not share the same values as your parents and you can not work out a compromise that works for both of you.

Characteristics of a Violent Relationship

Control

One person tries to control the other's behavior, decisions, or activities.



Intimidation

There is a pattern of threatening or frightening behavior to manipulate or control the other person.

Physical Violence

This includes hitting, punching, kicking, pushing, or any other form of physical harm to you, your pet, or your property.

Emotional Abuse

This can involve insults, humiliation, threats, or constant criticism.

Isolation

The abusive person may try to isolate the other person from friends, family, or other support systems. It makes it easier for the abuser to continue the abuse when the survivor does not have a support system.



Characteristics of a Violent Relationship

Jealousy

Excessive jealousy or possessiveness can be a warning sign of a potentially violent relationship.



Blaming

The abusive person often blames the other person for their behavior or for "provoking" them.



Cycle of Violence

The relationship may cycle through periods of tension building, explosion (violence), and reconciliation (honeymoon phase). It means abuse happens, then the abuser apologizes and is being nice, and then repeats the abuse.



CYCLE OF ABUSE

1. TENSIONS BUILD

The abuser creates tension and the survivor's stress builds.

2. INCIDENT

The abuser lashes out through physical, verbal, psychological or sexual abuse tactics to dominate the survivor.

4. CALM

Things seem peaceful, maybe even better than before. But often, this doesn't last long before the cycle starts over.

3. RECONCILIATION

The abuser makes excuses or attempts to apologize for the incident. Gaslighting is common, aka, "Nothing happened."

Note: The Cycle of Abuse was originally created by psychologist Lenore Walker. The Cycle does not represent all cases of domestic violence.

DomesticShelters.org

Characteristics of a Violent Relationship

Denial, Gaslighting, and Minimization

The abusive person may deny or downplay their behavior, which can make it challenging for the other person to recognize the abuse. They may also engage in gaslighting, where they deny the survivor's reality and suggest that the survivor is paranoid.



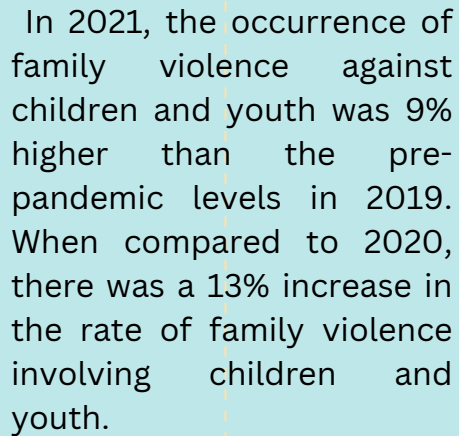
Credit: [Ray Family Therapy](#)

Power and Control Wheel



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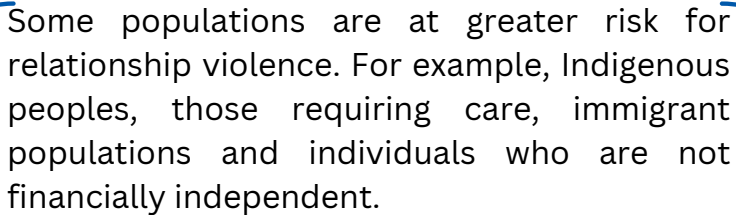
Did You Know...



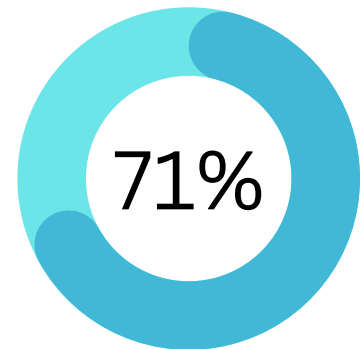
In 2021, the occurrence of family violence against children and youth was 9% higher than the pre-pandemic levels in 2019. When compared to 2020, there was a 13% increase in the rate of family violence involving children and youth.




70% of relationship violence is NOT reported to the police.



Some populations are at greater risk for relationship violence. For example, Indigenous peoples, those requiring care, immigrant populations and individuals who are not financially independent.



According to Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth (CHSCY) (2019), 71% of Canadian youth aged 12 to 17 reported that they had experienced at least one form of bullying (physical, verbal, social or relational, cyberbullying, etc.) in the past year.



The rate of family violence incidents involving children and youth stood at 343 cases per 100,000 population, with girls experiencing almost twice the rate (447) compared to boys (242).



In 2021, approximately one out of every five (19%) victims of family violence, as reported to the police, were children and youth aged 17 years and younger. Of these affected 24,504 individuals in this age group, a majority (64%) were girls.



Relationship violence accounts for over 1/4 of all violent offenses reported to the police.

Settings Where Relationship Violence May Occur

Relationship violence can happen in various contexts and settings, including domestic and intimate partner violence, as well as within familial relationships (e.g., parents, siblings, etc.), among neighbors, within: community, schools, workplaces, and in gang settings. Violence can be experienced by everyone regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, etc.



Household

Relationship violence can occur inside the household against an infant, child, adult of any gender, and older adult.



Education

RV happens in many contexts including in educational institutions (schools, universities & college campuses). RV can be from students or staff.



Residential care

Failing to provide basic and medical needs of residents, may include isolation, exerting control over residents and misusing power are actions of RV.



Cyberbullying

Sending mean or threatening messages by email, text or social media, posting embarrassing rumors, stories, pictures, jokes or any content online that causes humiliation is RV.



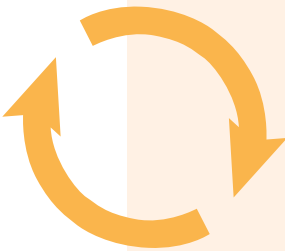
Workplace

RV in the workplace can start with minor incidents such as name-calling or exclusion and escalate to physical and sexual violence.

Why Does the Violence Continue?

CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The abusive relationship often follows a cycle of tension building, explosion, and reconciliation. The periods of calm and reconciliation may give the victim hope that the situation will improve.



LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Survivors may have low self-esteem, which can be further eroded by the abusive partner. This can create a sense of dependency and make it difficult for the survivor to leave. Abusers may also harbor feelings of insecurity or inadequacy, using violence and bullying as a way to exert control and boost their own self-esteem at the expense of others.



FINANCIAL DEPENDENCE

Economic factors can play a significant role. Victims who are financially dependent on their abusers may fear poverty or homelessness if they leave.



LACK OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Survivors may be isolated, lack a support system, or be unaware of available resources. Without a strong support network, they may feel trapped and unable to escape the abusive relationship.



MANIPULATION AND GASLIGHTING

Abusers often use manipulation and gaslighting techniques to control and confuse the survivors, making it challenging for them to recognize the abuse or believe in their ability to leave.



HOPE FOR CHANGE

Survivors may hold onto the hope that the abusive partner will change, especially during periods of remorse and promises to reform.



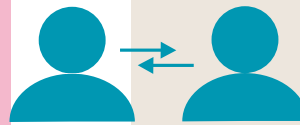
Why Does the Violence Continue?

SHAME, FEAR, AND GUILT



Survivors may feel shame or guilt, blaming themselves for the abuse. This emotional burden can prevent them from seeking help or reporting the abuse. Survivors may also fear retaliation if they report violent incidents, discouraging them from seeking help or reporting the behavior to authorities.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS



Dynamics such as peer pressure and the desire to fit in with a particular group can contribute to bullying and violent behaviors, as individuals may feel the need to conform to social norms within their peer circles.

LACK OF AWARENESS OR EMPATHY

Both parties may lack awareness about what a healthy relationship is and why violence should not be practiced. Some individuals may lack the ability to empathize with the feelings of others, making it easier for them to engage in harmful behaviors without considering the consequences.



POWER IMBALANCE

RV often involves a power imbalance, where the abuser perceives themselves as more powerful or dominant than the victim. This power dynamic can be reinforced by social structures within schools or communities.



ENVIRONMENT

Some may learn bullying behaviors from their environment, including family members, peers, or media influences, reinforcing these negative patterns. Issues within the home, such as exposure to violence or neglect, can contribute to aggressive behaviors in children, including bullying.



CULTURAL AND SOCIAL NORMS

Cultural and social norms that downplay the seriousness of bullying, promote aggressive behaviour, and endorse patriarchy and gender norms, can all contribute to the ongoing presence of violence.



Factors Specific to Indigenous Peoples

Historical Trauma

Indigenous communities have often experienced historical trauma due to colonization, forced relocations, and cultural suppression. These traumatic events can have lasting effects on individuals and communities.

Displacement and Land Disputes

Many indigenous peoples have faced and continue to face displacement from their ancestral lands, leading to challenges in maintaining cultural practices, identity, and traditional ways of life.

Systemic Discrimination

Systemic discrimination and prejudice against indigenous peoples in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and healthcare, contribute to social and economic disparities.

Economic Marginalization

Indigenous communities may experience economic marginalization, limiting access to job opportunities and financial resources.

Health Disparities

Indigenous populations often face higher rates of health disparities, including issues such as higher rates of chronic diseases, mental health challenges, and limited access to healthcare resources.

Limited Legal Protections

In some areas, indigenous peoples may lack adequate legal protections for their land, resources, and cultural heritage, making them vulnerable to exploitation and dispossession.

Stereotyping and Prejudice

Stereotypes and prejudice against indigenous peoples can perpetuate negative attitudes and contribute to discrimination.

Lack of Representation

Limited representation in political and decision-making processes can result in policies that do not adequately address the needs and concerns of indigenous communities.

Factors Specific to LGBTQIA2+ Individuals

- Fear of outing, being rejected by the community.
- Believing that their partner is their only connection to the LGBTQIA2+ community.
- Fear of homophobia, transphobia and stigma by those who are supposed to help the survivor.
- Lack of awareness on which agencies and resources are available for LGBTQIA2+



Factors Specific to Immigrants

- Post-migration strain and stigma.
- Fear of stereotypes, social isolation, shame, internalized racism leading the survivor to believe they should not speak up, not knowing the laws and rights
- Stress associated with migration.
- Changes in socioeconomic status.
- Language barriers and lack of knowledge of resources.

Factors Specific to Immigrants from Colonized Countries

- Historical trauma of legislation in Canada, including Chinese head tax and Continuous Journey Legislation.
- Discrimination based on visual differences, for example, colour of skin, appearance of eyes and hair, tatoos, dress



Warning Signs

What You Might Notice in People Experiencing Relationship Violence

It's important to remember that these signs do not necessarily indicate abuse, but they may warrant further investigation or support for the individual. If you suspect that someone is experiencing abuse, it's important to report your concerns to the appropriate authorities or seek help from a trusted professional.

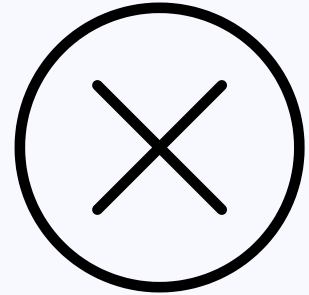
Emotional/Psychological Violence

- Living in Constant Fear
- Feelings of Shame, Guilt, or Embarrassment
- Low Self-Esteem
- Depression or Other Mental Illness (PTSD)
- Eating and Sleeping Problems
- Loss of Energy
- Self-Blame and Self-Harm
- Suicidal Thoughts/Tendencies
- Isolation



Sexual Violence

- Poor Body Image and Low Self-Esteem
- Inability to Have Healthy Intimate Relationships
- Unplanned Pregnancy
- Reproductive & Gynaecological Problems
- Self-Harm or Risky Behaviors
- Flashbacks or Triggers
- Dissociation:
- Substance use:
- Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms:

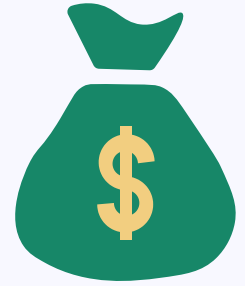


Physical violence

- Permanent disability such as blindness, deafness, loss of mobility
- Broken bones and/or teeth
- Head or spinal injuries
- Cuts, concussions, headaches and bruises Living in isolation
- Hiding injuries



Financial Violence



- Limited access to money or transportation
- No access to bank accounts
- Not allowed to work, attend job fairs or training
- No control or say in how money is spent
- Forced work in a family business where there is no pay and no child support



Risk Factors



Risk Factors for Relationship Violence

History of Violence: Individuals with a history of violence or abusive behavior may be at a higher risk.

Substance Use: Drug or alcohol use can contribute to increased aggression and violence.

Power Imbalance: Significant power imbalances in a relationship can contribute to abusive dynamics.

Low Self-Esteem: Individuals with low self-esteem may use control as a way to feel powerful.

Jealousy and Possessiveness: Excessive jealousy and possessiveness can escalate to controlling behaviour.

Family History: Growing up in an abusive household may contribute to the normalization of violent behaviour.

Social Isolation: Lack of social support and isolation can make it harder for survivors to seek help.

Lack of Education and Awareness: Lack of awareness about healthy relationships and communication skills.

Signs of Abusive And Violent Behavior to Watch For

Excessive Jealousy: Constant suspicion and jealousy.

Isolation: Attempting to isolate the partner from friends, family, or social activities.

Controlling Behaviour: Monitoring whereabouts, controlling finances, or making decisions without mutual agreement.

Stalking or Harassment: Following, showing up unexpectedly or spying. Harassing the survivor and their social network in person or online.

Threatening Behaviours: Threatening to harm or kill the survivor and/or anyone around them.

Verbal or Emotional Abuse: Insults, humiliation, degradation, or threats intended to harm emotionally.

Physical Violence: Any form of physical harm, including hitting, slapping, or pushing. Destroying property, harming or neglecting pets.

Sexual Coercion: Forcing or pressuring a partner into unwanted sexual activities.

Unpredictable Mood Swings: Frequent and extreme mood changes that create tension and fear.

Possessiveness: Treating the partner as an object to be owned rather than as an individual.

Manipulative Behavior: Using manipulation and guilt to control the partner.

Ways to Intervene

Before getting involved, ask yourself "is it safe?" If the situation is already violent or appears to be escalating quickly, do not intervene directly, call 911, it is an emergency. Do not try to "rescue" a person experiencing relationship violence or fight off an abuser: Not only are you endangering yourself, but the abuser may take out their anger on the abused person later.

If you suspect someone is in a violent relationship, there are several ways you can intervene and offer support:

Listen and Believe: Listen to their concerns without judgment and believe what they are telling you.

Offer Support: Let them know you are there for them and offer to help in any way you can.

Safety Planning: Help them create a safety plan in case they need to leave the relationship quickly, or in case they decide to stay.

You can use these comprehensive resources to safety plan for different scenarios:



Encourage seeking professional help and community support: Encourage them to seek help from a counselor, therapist, or support group. Also, suggest reaching out to trusted individuals, such as family and friends. A strong support system and community can improve the chances of getting help and healing. Sometimes it is important to reach out to others without letting the abuser know, as they may get more violent.

Provide Resources: Offer information about local shelters, hotlines, and support services. If they choose to stay in a violent relationship, ask them if they are aware of the cycle of violence and if they have noticed its stages in their relationship. You can explain it to them if they are not familiar with it.

*******An Important Resource*****:** Kids Help Phone: Call 1-800-668-6868 (toll-free) or text CONNECT to 686868. Available 24 hours a day to anyone in Canada aged 5 to 29 who wants confidential and anonymous care from trained responders.

Respect Their Decisions: Ultimately, it is up to the individual to decide what steps to take. Respect their choices and offer support without pressure.

Social Determinants of Health

Now let's talk about something important: systemic inequalities and their impact on violence in communities. When certain groups face discrimination and barriers due to factors like race, gender, or socio-economic status, it creates an environment where violence can thrive. Think about what happens when people don't have equal access to resources like education, healthcare, and employment.

We need to understand the complex interconnection between social factors and violence in order to address and prevent it effectively.

In many societies, gender norms play a significant role in shaping expectations and behaviors related to masculinity and femininity. One common gender norm is the expectation of female submissiveness, which reinforces the idea that women should be passive, obedient, and accommodating. This norm can lead to women being seen as less capable or deserving of respect, which can contribute to their vulnerability to violence. This is the pervasive gender norm in Canadian Society especially in patriarchal families.

On the other hand, toxic masculinity refers to the harmful aspects of traditional masculinity, such as the emphasis on dominance, aggression, and the suppression of emotions. Toxic masculinity can create a culture that glorifies violence and aggression as a way to assert power and control over others. This can lead to men feeling pressure to conform to these ideals, even if it means resorting to violence to assert their dominance and power.

Both female submissiveness and toxic masculinity can contribute to a cycle of violence. For example, when women are socialized to be submissive and compliant, they may be less likely to speak out against abusive behavior or seek help when they are in abusive relationships. Similarly, when men feel pressure to conform to toxic masculine ideals, they may be more likely to resort to violence as a way to assert their power and control over others. Similarly, misogyny, rooted in patriarchal beliefs, devalues and objectifies women, contributing to a culture where violence against them is normalized.

Breaking free from these harmful ideas is essential for preventing violence and creating a more equitable society.

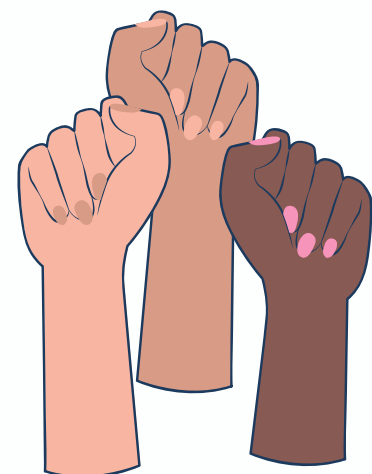
Racism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia all intersect with violence by perpetuating discrimination and marginalization, which can fuel resentment and hostility towards targeted groups.

Systems of oppression, such as racism, create barriers that limit certain people's access to essential resources such as health care, education, fair treatment, and feeling safe. This unfairness can make some people more vulnerable to violence.

Examples

- Racial minorities often experience inequalities in healthcare, which can result in untreated illnesses and increased health risks. They may be discriminated against in schools, which can look like not being selected for a school team even though they are better than a peer.
- Limited educational opportunities due to systemic racism can perpetuate cycles of poverty and lack of opportunity, increasing susceptibility to violence and crime. Parents may be working for minimum wages to make ends meet so they are not able to participate in after-school activities.
- Discriminatory housing practices can lead to young people from marginalized communities living in neighborhoods that are not safe. They might not have access to good schools or parks, and their homes might not be in good condition. This can affect their education, health, and overall well-being.
- Economic disparities resulting from discrimination make it difficult for individuals to afford basic needs, leaving them more vulnerable to exploitation and violence. Some youth may not have access to three meals a day, so they may be bullied into doing favors for lunch.

Social norms and values that prioritize aggression and dominance further reinforce these harmful attitudes and behaviors. To combat violence, we must challenge and dismantle these systems of oppression, promote empathy, respect, and equality, and create inclusive and accepting communities where everyone feels safe and valued.



What Can We Do about Social Inequalities?



We can play a significant role in addressing systemic inequalities and reducing violence in our communities. By working together and standing up for what's right, all of us can contribute to creating a more inclusive and peaceful world.

- One way is by educating ourselves and others about social justice issues through books, videos, and discussions.
- We can also speak up against unfair treatment and discrimination when we see it, whether it's at school, in our neighborhoods, or online.
- Taking part in community service projects and volunteering with organizations that work towards equality can make a positive impact.
- Additionally, we can support our peers who may be experiencing discrimination or violence by offering empathy and friendship.



For more information on how to support a friend, check this website out:



Exercise

To support your peers experiencing discrimination or violence, you can organize a peer support group or circle. This could be a safe space where everyone can share their experiences, feelings, and concerns related to discrimination or violence. The group can offer empathy, understanding, and friendship to those who need it most. Participants can take turns sharing their stories, and others can listen actively, offer words of support, and express solidarity. This exercise helps create a sense of community and belonging, showing that no one is alone in their struggles. Remember to respect and validate each other's experiences and feelings even if they are very different from you.

Exercise

Organize or participate in a workshop focused on social justice issues. This could involve inviting guest speakers, watching relevant documentaries together, or discussing articles or books that highlight systemic inequalities such as racism. By engaging in open and respectful conversations, you can deepen your understanding of these issues and explore ways to address them collaboratively. This exercise not only raises awareness but also empowers you to take action in your communities!



Chapter 3

How to Maintain a Healthy Relationship



Objectives

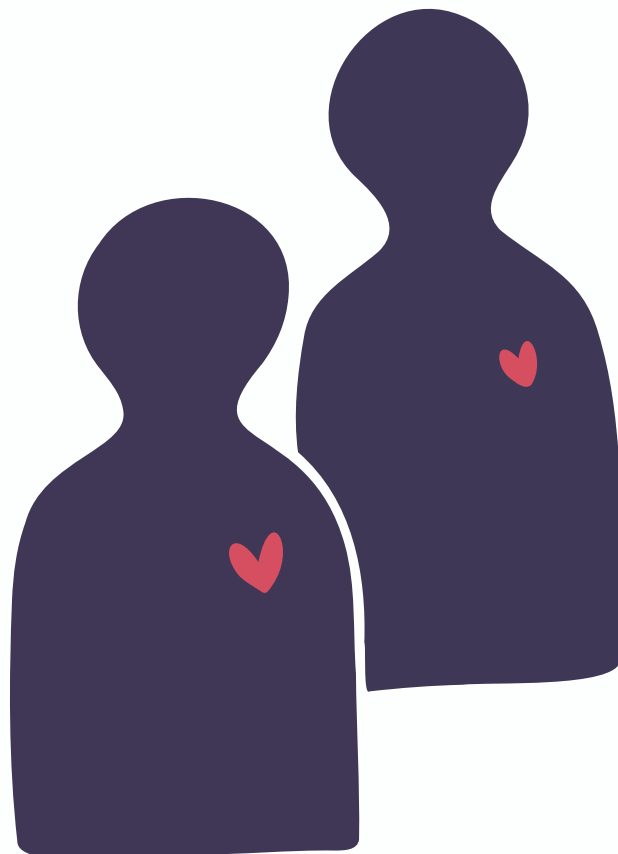
By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Describe effective communication strategies in relationships.
2. Explain the importance of mutual respect in a healthy relationship.
3. Discuss the role of empathy in understanding and supporting others in a relationship.
4. Apply conflict resolution strategies to address disagreements in a relationship.
5. Demonstrate active listening skills in a relationship setting.
6. Analyze the impact of different communication styles on relationship dynamics.
7. Compare and contrast healthy and unhealthy relationship patterns.
8. Develop a plan to maintain a healthy relationship over time.
9. Create strategies to navigate challenges and changes in a relationship.
10. Evaluate personal communication skills and identify areas for improvement in maintaining healthy relationships.
11. Critique media portrayals of relationships and their influence on relationship expectations.

How to Maintain a Healthy Relationship

Maintaining healthy relationships requires effort and commitment from both parties involved. Communication is key—being open, honest, and respectful in your interactions helps build trust and understanding. It's important to listen actively and empathetically, acknowledging each other's feelings and perspectives. Setting and respecting boundaries ensures that both partners feel safe and respected. Supporting each other's goals and aspirations, and celebrating successes together, strengthens the bond between partners. Additionally, spending quality time together, while also allowing for individual interests and space, helps maintain a healthy balance in the relationship. Conflict is inevitable, but learning to resolve conflicts calmly and constructively.

- Ensure that the relationship you have with yourself is a positive one.
- Accept and celebrate the fact that we are all different.
- Actively listen to hear what other people have to say.
- Give people time and “be present” when you are with them.
- Develop and work on your communication skills.
- Learn to be more understanding and empathetic.



Example

Leila and Maya have been best friends for as long as they can remember, and they always make sure to talk things out when they have disagreements. Recently, Leila's family decided to move to a new town, which meant she would have to change schools. Leila was worried about leaving Maya and their other friends behind. However, Maya listened to Leila's concerns and understood how important the move was for her family. They talked about ways to stay connected, like video calls and visits during school breaks. Maya supported Leila's decision and promised to stay in touch no matter what. Through their open communication and support for each other, Leila and Maya were able to navigate this big change in their friendship and remain close despite the distance.



Active Listening Techniques

Active listening is a communication technique that involves fully concentrating on what is being said, understanding the message, and responding thoughtfully. It goes beyond just hearing words; it involves paying attention to the speaker's tone, body language, and emotions to grasp the complete message. Active listeners use verbal and nonverbal cues to show their engagement, such as nodding, making eye contact, and providing feedback. They also ask clarifying questions to ensure they understand correctly. Active listening is crucial in building trust, resolving conflicts, and fostering meaningful connections in relationships.



Photo Credit: Wide Lens Leadership

Exercise: Practicing Effective Communication in Relationships

1. Choose a partner to participate in this exercise with you.
2. Choose a specific topic and have a focused conversation about it with your partner.
3. Use active listening techniques to ensure you understand your partner's perspective. This includes maintaining eye contact, nodding to show understanding, and summarizing what they've said.
4. Practice expressing your thoughts and feelings clearly and calmly. Use "I" statements to express your emotions and avoid blaming language.
5. Discuss a specific topic or issue that is important to both of you. This could be a decision you need to make together, a conflict that needs resolution, or simply a topic you both find interesting.
6. Reflect on the conversation afterward. What did you learn about your partner's perspective? How did your communication skills impact the discussion?
7. Repeat this exercise regularly to continue improving your communication skills and deepening your understanding of each other.



Exercise: Maintaining a Healthy Relationship



1. Reflect on a past or current relationship (friendship, family, romantic) that you consider healthy and fulfilling.
2. Identify three key aspects or behaviors that contribute to the health of this relationship (e.g., open communication, mutual respect, quality time together).
3. Write a brief description of how each aspect or behavior is demonstrated in your relationship.
4. Consider how you can apply these aspects or behaviors to other relationships in your life.
5. Share your reflections with class/ a trusted friend, family member, or counselor, and discuss how you can incorporate these practices into your relationships.

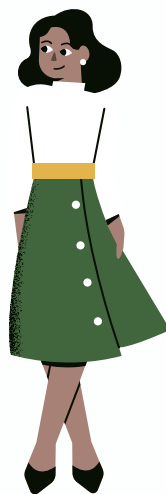
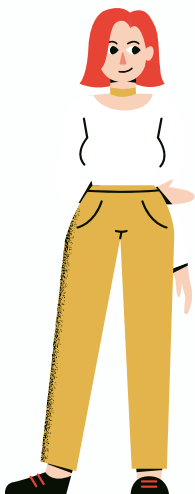


The Importance of Talking to a Trusted Adult

Talking to a trusted adult is crucial because in many situations, children and youth who have experienced harm could have avoided it if they had confided in an adult earlier. This could have led to someone intervening and preventing the harm. However, many young people are afraid, unsure how to approach the situation, or may not have a trusted adult to turn to. It's important to understand that even if there is fear of repercussions, it's often better to seek help than to deal with the situation alone, as things can escalate. If you don't have anyone you trust, try to find someone you can talk to. Most parents would want to help if they knew, even if they may not know how to initially. Having conversations with someone can lead to finding solutions and getting the support needed. It's important to choose an adult you feel comfortable with and who you trust to keep your conversation confidential, especially when discussing sensitive topics.

Talking to a trusted adult about difficult situations or experiences is crucial for several reasons.

- Firstly, adults often have more life experience and can offer valuable advice and perspective. They can help you navigate challenging situations and provide emotional support.
- Additionally, trusted adults can help you identify and access resources that may be available to you.
- By confiding in a trusted adult, you can feel less isolated and more empowered to address the issue at hand.



Case Study: Sarah's Story

Sarah is 16 years old, and she has been experiencing bullying at school for several months. The bullying started when a group of classmates began calling her names and making hurtful comments about her when they realized she is attracted to girls. Sarah tried to ignore the bullying at first, hoping it would stop on its own, but it only seemed to escalate.

Sarah's grades started to decline, and she began avoiding school altogether, which concerned her parents. One day, Sarah's parents noticed bruises on her arms and asked her about them. Sarah broke down and admitted that she had been physically bullied by a group of youth in addition to the verbal bullying.

Feeling overwhelmed and scared, Sarah's parents immediately contacted the school principal to discuss the situation. The principal took the bullying allegations seriously and launched an investigation. The bullies were identified and faced disciplinary action, including counseling and a suspension from school.

Sarah also began seeing a counselor to help her cope with the emotional impact of the bullying. With support from her parents, school, and counselor, Sarah gradually started to feel more confident and safe at school. She learned strategies to deal with bullying, such as assertively standing up for herself and seeking help from adults when needed.

Over time, Sarah's grades improved, and she regained her enthusiasm for school and social activities. The experience taught Sarah the importance of speaking up about bullying and seeking help from trusted adults. She became an advocate for anti-bullying initiatives at her school, helping to raise awareness and support other youth who were experiencing similar challenges.



Role Modeling

Role modelling plays an important role in shaping the behaviour and attitudes of youth. Young people often look up to adults, such as parents and teachers, as role models. These individuals can influence youth's beliefs, values, and actions through their words and actions.

When adults model positive behavior, such as kindness, empathy, and respect, youth are more likely to repeat these behaviors in their own lives. Conversely, when adults model negative behavior, such as aggression, discrimination, or disrespect, young people may also mimic these behaviors.

Role modelling can also extend to how adults handle difficult situations. For example, if a parent or teacher responds to conflict with calmness and problem-solving skills, young people are more likely to learn these skills themselves. On the other hand, if adults respond with anger or aggression, young people may learn to handle conflict in a similar manner.

It's important to be aware of the role models in your life and how their behavior influences you. Look for individuals who demonstrate qualities and values that you admire, such as kindness, integrity, and resilience. Pay attention to how your role models handle challenges and difficult situations. Use their behavior as a guide for how to navigate similar circumstances in your own life. Remember that others may look up to you as a role model. Try to demonstrate the same qualities and values that you admire in others. Remember that your actions and words can have a significant impact on others, especially younger children. Strive to be a positive influence in your interactions with others.



Case Study: Maya's Experience with Role Models

Maya is a 14-year-old student who has always looked up to her older sister, Sofia, as a role model. Sofia is confident, kind, and excels in school and extracurricular activities. Maya admires her sister's ability to balance academics, sports, and social life effortlessly.

One day, Maya overhears Sofia talking to a friend about skipping school to go to a party. Maya is shocked and disappointed, as she has always seen Sofia as a responsible student. She feels torn between her admiration for her sister and her own values of honesty and integrity.

Maya decides to talk to Sofia about what she overheard. Sofia admits that she made a mistake and assures Maya that she is still learning and growing, just like everyone else. She apologizes for not setting a better example and promises to do better in the future.

This experience prompts Maya to reflect on her own role as a potential role model for her younger cousin, who often looks up to her. Maya decides to be more mindful of her actions and words, knowing that she has the power to influence others, just like Sofia influenced her.

Through this experience, Maya learns that role models are not perfect and that it's okay to make mistakes. What's important is acknowledging those mistakes and striving to be a positive influence in the lives of others. Maya's relationship with Sofia deepens as they both learn and grow from this experience.



Co-Regulation and Support Systems



Co-regulation and support systems are essential components of emotional well-being and mental health. Co-regulation refers to the process by which individuals regulate their emotions in interaction with others. This process is particularly important during times of stress or when facing challenges. When someone, especially a younger person, observes someone else remaining calm and resilient during challenges, it can have a calming effect on them as well, helping them to also stay composed and able to regulate their emotions.

Support systems are the networks of people who provide emotional, practical, and sometimes financial support to individuals. Having a strong support system can greatly enhance one's ability to co-regulate and manage their emotions. For example, during times of stress, having someone to talk to can provide a sense of relief and validation. Additionally, having supportive relationships can help buffer against the negative effects of stress and adversity.

Support systems can take many forms, including family, friends, teachers, and mental health professionals. It's important to cultivate these relationships and seek help when needed. By nurturing supportive relationships and practicing co-regulation, we can build resilience and improve our overall well-being.

Secure Attachment

Secure attachment refers to a healthy and strong emotional bond that forms between an infant and their primary caregiver, often a parent. This bond is characterized by the infant feeling safe, secure, and protected by their caregiver, which allows them to explore their environment and develop a sense of trust in the world around them.

Secure attachment is essential for healthy emotional development and forms the basis for future relationships. Children who develop secure attachments are more likely to have higher self-esteem, better social skills, and healthier relationships later in life.

Secure attachment is established through consistent and responsive caregiving. When a caregiver consistently meets the infant's needs, responds to their cues promptly, and provides comfort and reassurance, the infant learns that their caregiver is reliable and trustworthy. This forms the foundation of a secure attachment, which provides the child with a sense of safety and security that is essential for healthy development.

When there is no secure attachment, we may experience difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy relationships. This can manifest in several ways:

- Without a secure attachment, we may struggle to trust others and may be overly cautious or guarded in our relationships.
- We may have a fear of getting close to others emotionally, leading to difficulties in forming deep and meaningful connections.
- We may also crave closeness and reassurance from others but also fear rejection or abandonment. We may be overly dependent on others for validation and reassurance.
- A lack of secure attachment can contribute to feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness, impacting our self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Secure attachment helps us learn to regulate our emotions. Without it, we may struggle to manage our feelings, leading to emotional outbursts or emotional numbness.
- A lack of secure attachment in childhood can increase the risk of developing mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and personality disorders.

Understanding the concept of secure attachment can help you build healthier relationships and improve your overall well-being. Here are some tips:

1. Understand that forming secure attachments with others is crucial for emotional health and well-being.
2. Think about your early experiences with caregivers and how they may have influenced your attachment style. This can help you understand your own behavior in relationships.
3. Be empathetic and understanding towards others, especially in your close relationships. Try to be responsive to their needs and emotions.
4. Communicate openly and honestly with your loved ones. Express your feelings and needs clearly, and listen actively to their perspectives.
5. If you're struggling with relationships or attachment issues, don't hesitate to seek support from a trusted adult or mental health professional.
6. Focus on building secure attachments with others by being reliable, trustworthy, and responsive in your relationships.



Case Study: Lily



Lily is 14 and has been struggling with feelings of loneliness and isolation. She finds it challenging to connect with her peers and often feels like she doesn't fit in. Lily's parents are both busy with work and often travel for business, leaving her feeling neglected and unsupported at home. Lily's difficulties in forming secure attachments stem from her early childhood experiences. Her parents were often absent during her formative years. This lack of consistent and responsive caregiving has made it difficult for Lily to trust others and form meaningful relationships.

As a result, Lily has developed a fear of intimacy and struggles to open up to others. She often feels misunderstood and has a hard time expressing her emotions. This has led to feelings of low self-esteem and a sense of unworthiness.

Despite these challenges, Lily is determined to overcome her difficulties. She has started attending therapy to work through her issues and learn healthy coping mechanisms. She is also trying to build stronger relationships with her peers by participating in school clubs and activities.

Through therapy and her own efforts, Lily is slowly learning to trust others and form more secure attachments. She is beginning to see that she is worthy of love and belonging, and is hopeful for a brighter future where she can form meaningful and fulfilling relationships.

To know more about different attachment styles, see here:



Secure Attachment

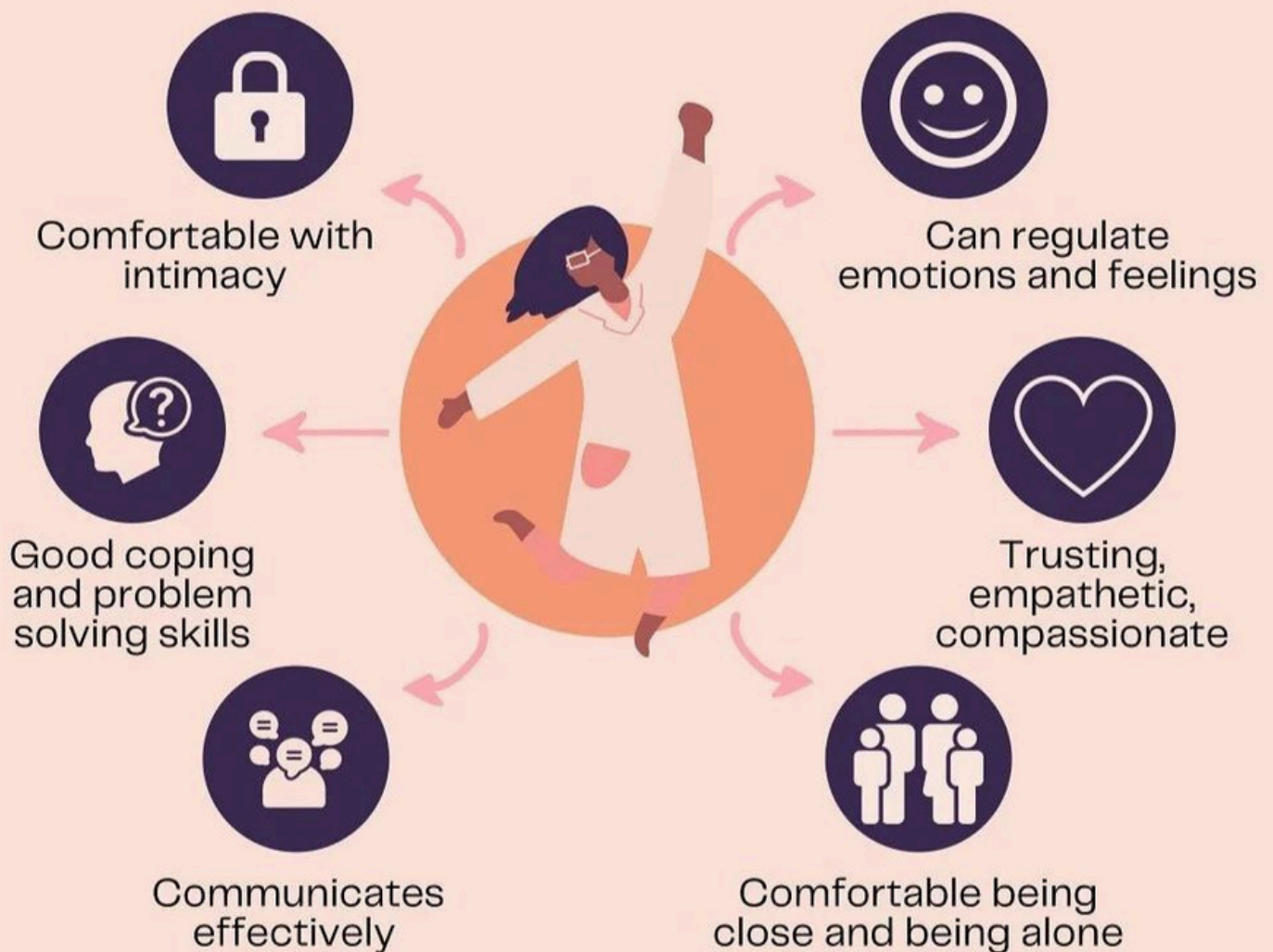





Photo Credit: [Simply Psychology](#)


Emotional intelligence and Self-Regulation skills


Emotional intelligence (EI) and self-regulation skills are crucial for navigating life's challenges, building healthy relationships, and achieving personal success. EI encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, and manage our own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. Self-regulation involves managing our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in different situations. Developing EI and self-regulation skills can lead to better mental health, improved decision-making, and stronger interpersonal relationships. Here are some key aspects of each:


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Recognizing emotions: Being aware of and accurately identifying your own emotions is the first step in EI. It involves understanding what you are feeling and why.
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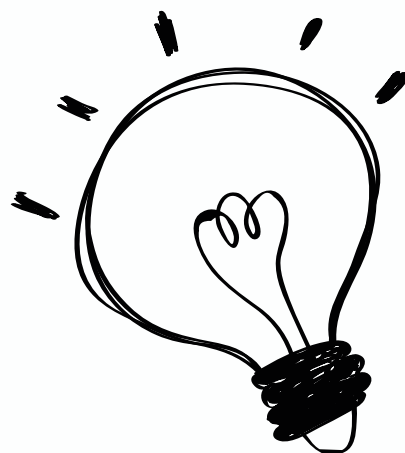
Managing emotions: Once you recognize your emotions, you can learn to manage them effectively. This involves regulating your emotions so that they don't overwhelm you or negatively impact your behavior.
- 

Empathy: Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. It is a key component of EI and involves being able to see things from someone else's perspective.
- 

Social skills: Good social skills are essential for building and maintaining healthy relationships. This includes effective communication, conflict resolution, and cooperation with others.
- 

Self-awareness: Self-awareness is the ability to recognize your own strengths, weaknesses, values, and emotions. It allows you to understand how your thoughts and emotions affect your behaviour.
- 

Self-regulation: Self-regulation involves controlling your impulses, managing your stress, and adapting to changing circumstances. It allows you to stay calm and focused in challenging situations.



Self-care, Self-love

Self-care and self-love are very important to our overall well-being. They involve taking actions to take care of our physical and emotional needs. Self-care is about recognizing when we need to take a break, setting boundaries, and engaging in activities that recharge and rejuvenate us. Self-love is about accepting and valuing ourselves as we are, being kind and compassionate to ourselves, and recognizing our worth.

Practicing self-care can include activities such as:

- Engaging in regular exercise
- Eating nutritious meals
- Getting enough sleep
- Spending time outdoors
- Practicing mindfulness or meditation
- Engaging in hobbies or activities you enjoy
- Setting boundaries in your relationships
- Seeking support from friends, family, or a therapist when needed

Self-love involves:

- Practicing positive self-talk and affirmations
- Forgiving yourself for past mistakes
- Setting realistic expectations for yourself
- Celebrating your accomplishments, no matter how small
- Surrounding yourself with people who uplift and support you
- Engaging in activities that make you feel good about yourself

I matter



8 types of self care

PHYSICAL



nutrition
exercise
sleep

MENTAL



mindfulness
self-talk
therapy

EMOTIONAL



gratitude
triggers
journal

SPIRITUAL



meditate
nature
yoga

INTELLECTUAL



read
learn
hobbies

ENVIRONMENT



clean
safety

SOCIAL



boundaries
connection

FINANCIAL



budget
save

Photo Credit: ScottsDale Recovery

Some Ideas for you to Explore!



SELF-CARE ROUTINE
TO DO IDEAS

- DRINK WATER
- EXERCISE
- LEARN NEW THINGS
- SKIN CARE
- DAILY REGIME
- GET MORE SLEEP
- EAT WELL
- FIND A HOBBY
- LOVE YOURSELF

Photo Credit: Wellness Road Psychology.



Self-Esteem



Self-esteem refers to how we think about ourselves, and what sense of worth and value we attribute to ourselves. It reflects our beliefs about our abilities, qualities, and attributes. Healthy self-esteem is important for our health and our ability to maintain healthy relationships, as it influences how we think, feel, and act.

These are some factors that contribute to our sense of self-esteem:

- Self-worth, which is feeling deserving of respect and kindness, regardless of achievements or failures.
- Self-acceptance, which is embracing all aspects of ourselves, including strengths and weaknesses.
- Self-efficacy, which is believing in our ability to achieve goals and handle challenges.
- Social connectedness, which is feeling a sense of belonging and acceptance in relationships and communities.
- Personal values, which is aligning our actions with our personal beliefs and values, leading to a sense of integrity and authenticity.

Low self-esteem can show itself in various ways, such as negative self-talk, seeking approval from others, fear of failure, and avoiding challenges. On the other hand, healthy self-esteem is associated with resilience, positive relationships, and overall well-being.



How can we improve our self-esteem?

1. Practice self-compassion: Treat yourself with kindness and understanding, especially during difficult times.
2. Set realistic goals: Break down larger goals into smaller, achievable steps to build confidence.
3. Challenge negative thoughts: Replace self-critical thoughts with more balanced and realistic ones.
4. Celebrate achievements: Acknowledge and celebrate your accomplishments, no matter how small.
5. Seek support: Talk to friends, family, or a mental health professional for encouragement and guidance.



Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a struggle or contest between people with opposite needs, ideas, beliefs, or goals. This is often unavoidable in life and often happens because people don't understand one another. A conflict could happen between you and your friends, parents, siblings, teachers, or anyone else in your life.

Managing Conflict

1. Talk to the other person to find out their opinion of the situation, and tell them yours.
2. Set some rules. For example, we will speak one at a time, listen to each other, not talk while the other is talking, or call each other names.
3. Identify the problem clearly.
4. Agree on what each person wants when the conflict is fixed.
5. Look for solutions to the problem.
6. Think of as many solutions as possible.
7. Select those solutions which will give each person something that they want and agree with them.
8. Make a plan on how to give each person something that they want.



Assertiveness

Assertiveness is the ability to speak up for yourself in a way that is honest and respectful. However, this skill does not come naturally to everyone. Here's what it means to be assertive: You can give an opinion or say how you feel. You can ask for what you want or need. You can disagree respectfully. You can offer your ideas and suggestions. You can say no without feeling guilty. You can speak up for someone else.

Importance of Being Assertive

An assertive communication style can help us do the things we want to do. Being assertive shows you respect yourself and others. People who speak assertively send the message that they believe in themselves.

Three Communication Styles

Passive

When a person holds back what they really think or feel

Example:

If you ask Paula what movie she wants to see, she's most likely to say, "I don't know, what do you want to see?" She usually lets others decide things, but later regrets not saying what she wanted. It bothers her that her friends do most of the talking. But when Paula tries to break into the conversation, she speaks softly that others talk over her without realizing.

Assertive

When people speak up for themselves honestly and respectfully

Example:

When you ask for Ben's opinion, he gives it honestly. If he disagrees with you, he'll say so – but in a way that doesn't put you down or make you feel wrong. Ben is interested in your opinion, too. He listens to what you have to say. Even when Ben disagrees with you, you still feel he respects your point of view.

Aggressive

When a person forcefully states opinion or ignore others' opinions

Example:

Janine has no trouble speaking her mind. But when she does, she comes across as loud and opinionated. Janine dominates the conversation, often interrupts, and rarely listens. If she disagrees with you, she lets you know – usually with sarcasm or a putdown. She has a reputation for being bossy and insensitive.

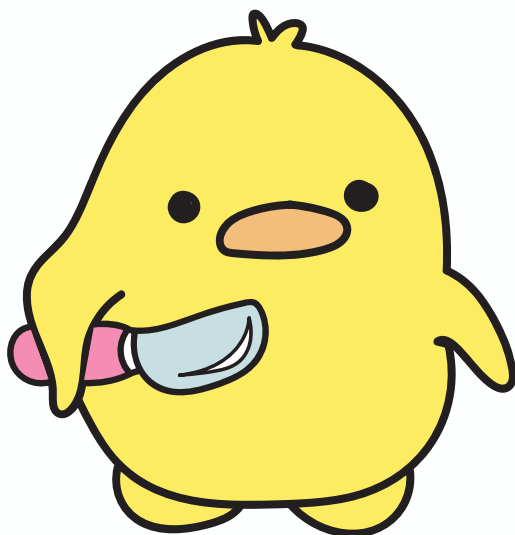


Anger is often considered a secondary emotion, which means that it is usually a response to another primary emotion such as fear, sadness, or frustration. When we feel threatened or hurt in some way, anger can surface as a way to protect ourselves or mask our more vulnerable feelings. Understanding this can help us delve deeper into our emotions and address the root causes of our anger. By acknowledging and processing our primary emotions, we can learn healthier ways to cope and communicate effectively with others. Next time you feel angry, take a moment to reflect on what might be triggering that emotion and explore the underlying feelings that lie beneath it.



Anger Management

It may seem like anger is the problem, but the actual issue lies beneath the surface in the underlying emotions.



It may seem as though anger is all you feel, but if you slow down and breathe, you will discover other feelings.

Anger Management

What we can do to manage our anger?

Release your intense energy without causing harm to yourself or others. Afterwards, seek out someone to converse with and delve into the emotions hidden behind the anger.

Allow yourself to express your feelings in a healthy way. Find a constructive outlet for your emotions, whether it's through physical activity, creative expression, or simply talking to a trusted friend or therapist. By exploring the root of your anger and sharing your emotions with someone else, you can gain a deeper understanding of yourself and find ways to manage your intense energy more effectively. Remember, it's okay to feel strong emotions, but it's important to handle them in a way that promotes healing and growth.



Three Questions to Ask Yourself When You Are Feeling Angry

1. How can I prioritize my self-care at this moment?

For instance:

- I could focus on my breathing
- Take a short break
- Go for a walk
- Practice positive self-talk
- Address underlying feelings rather than just anger.

Three Questions to Ask Yourself When You Are Feeling Angry

1. How can I prioritize my self-care at this moment?

For instance, I could:

- Focus on my breathing
- Take a short break
- Go for a walk
- Practice positive self-talk
- Address underlying feelings rather than just anger.

2. What steps should I take regarding the situation?

For instance, I could:

- Focus on what is currently important and true.
- Clearly and openly represent myself.
- Ask for what I need effectively.

3. How can I approach this situation with respect?

For instance, I could:

- Use "I" statements
- Allow myself time to cool down before communicating
- Avoid placing blame on the other person
- Select my words thoughtfully



What is anger?

- An emotional reaction
- A gateway to other emotions
- A facet of assertiveness
- A pathway to deeper understanding of others
- A way to release emotions
- A means of self-protection

Anger is a complex and multifaceted emotion that can manifest in various ways. It can provide a pathway to a deeper understanding of others, as exploring the root causes of anger can lead to greater empathy and insight into different perspectives.

Anger is a powerful emotion that we all experience at some point in our lives. It is important to understand that while feeling angry is natural, it is how we choose to express and manage that anger that truly matters. Remember, anger is just a feeling, and it does not have to dictate our actions. By learning healthy coping mechanisms and practicing self-control, we can effectively navigate through moments of anger without causing harm to ourselves or others. It is essential to acknowledge our feelings, but it is equally important to respond to them in a way that promotes understanding, compassion, and positive communication.



Chapter 4

Peer Pressure and Bullying



Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Identify different types of peer pressure and bullying behaviors.
2. Describe the potential impacts of peer pressure and bullying on individuals and communities.
3. Analyze strategies to resist negative peer pressure and respond effectively to bullying situations.
4. Evaluate the role of bystanders in preventing and addressing bullying.
5. Demonstrate effective communication and assertiveness skills to navigate peer pressure situations.
6. Apply problem-solving skills to address and resolve conflicts arising from peer pressure and bullying.
7. Discuss the importance of seeking support from trusted adults and resources when experiencing or witnessing peer pressure and bullying.

Name:

Class:



BULLYING AND PEER PRESSURE

Task: Jot down your thoughts on what constitutes bullying versus peer pressure. What do they have in common?

1) What kind of activities is considered bullying?

2) What behaviors are acts of peer pressure?

What is Peer Pressure?

Almost everyone has experienced peer pressure before, either positive or negative. Peer pressure is when your classmates, or other people your age, try to get you to do something. It is easy to give in to peer pressure because everyone wants to fit in and be liked. Especially when it seems like “everyone is doing it”. Sometimes people give in to peer pressure because they do not want to hurt someone’s feelings or they do not know how to get out of the situation so they just say “yes”.

Types of Peer Pressure

Rejection

Pressure by threatening to end a relationship or a friendship

Unspoken Pressure

Simply seeing all your peers doing something or wearing something can be a form of pressure

Insults

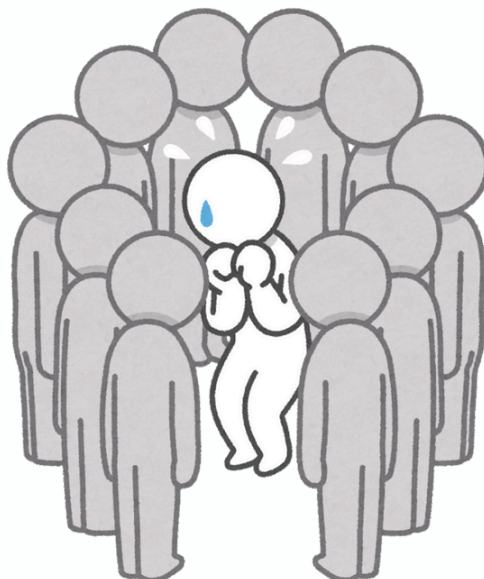
Making a person feel bad for not doing something, so that they eventually will


Reasoning

Pressure by giving a person reasons why they should do something


To Deal with Peer Pressure

1. Listen to your gut. If you feel uncomfortable, even if your friends seem to be OK with what's going on, it means that something about the situation is wrong for you.
2. Plan for possible pressure situations. If you'd like to go to a party, but you believe you may be offered alcohol or drugs there, think ahead of how you'll handle this challenge. Decide ahead of time – and even rehearse – what you'll say and do.
3. Arrange a “bail out” code phrase you can use with your parents. You might call home from a party at which you feel pressured to drink alcohol and say, for instance, “can you come drive me home? I have a terrible headache.”
4. Learn to feel comfortable by saying “no”. For example, “No thanks, I've got a soccer game tomorrow.”
5. Hang out with people who feel the same way you do. Just having one other person stand with you against peer pressure makes it much easier for both people to resist.
6. Blame your parents: “Are you kidding? If my mom found out, she'd kill me.”
7. If a situation seems dangerous, don't hesitate to get an adult's help.









EFFECTIVE WAYS FOR TEENS TO OVERCOME PEER PRESSURE

- 



1 Stay mindful of your feelings and ask yourself if the situation feels right to you, even if your peers seem okay with it.


- 



2 Struggling to say no? Plan and stay prepared to get out of an uncomfortable situation by making a good excuse.


- 



3 Remember, not everybody will like you. Don't force yourself to please them if you are not okay with a situation.


- 


4 Have a friend who shares a similar personality as you and can show the right path when under pressure.


- 

5 When stressed, don't resort to toxic habits. Instead, try listening to music, talking to your parents or friends, and doing your favorite activity.


- 

6 Take a deep breath of courage and tell the person pressuring you about your feelings.



Example

Read the following scenario and think of possible solutions.

I am having problems with my friends at school. We are a group of five. I enjoy being with them and doing things, but sometimes after school we go together and do things I do not feel good about, like stealing and smoking cigarettes. Another time they found a can of paint and sprayed words on the garden wall. I have sometimes said I do not feel it is right, but my friends have all laughed and teased me and called me names. They say that if I do not want to do these things with them, then I must leave the group. I do not want to be without friends, but I feel bad doing these things.



Solution Ideas

- Ask a trusted adult for help or advice
- Think of excuses to leave; for example: “I have to go home for dinner or I have soccer practice”.
- Use the “bail out” code.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. It can be physical, verbal, or social, and is typically repeated over time. Bullying can take many forms, including teasing, name-calling, spreading rumors, exclusion, and physical attacks. It often occurs in settings where there is a lack of witnesses, such as schools, playgrounds, or online. Bullying can have serious consequences for the victim, including emotional distress, low self-esteem, and academic or social problems. It's important to recognize and address bullying behaviour to create safe and respectful environments for everyone.

There are several types of bullying, including:

1. **Verbal bullying:** This involves using words to hurt others, such as name-calling, teasing, or making threats.
2. **Physical bullying:** This includes hitting, kicking, pushing, or otherwise physically harming someone.
3. **Social bullying:** Also known as relational bullying, this type of bullying involves spreading rumors, excluding others from social groups, or damaging someone's reputation.
4. **Cyberbullying:** This form of bullying takes place online or through digital devices and can include sending hurtful messages, spreading rumors, or sharing embarrassing photos or videos.
5. **Sexual bullying:** This involves making unwanted sexual comments or advances, or engaging in sexual harassment or assault.
6. **Prejudicial bullying:** This type of bullying is based on prejudice or discrimination, such as bullying someone because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.
7. **Sextortion:** This is when someone threatens to share private or sensitive images, videos, or messages unless you do something for them, such as paying money or providing more explicit material. It's a form of blackmail that often targets young people online.

What to do if You Are Being Bullied

Remember, you have the right to feel safe and respected, and there are people who can help you address bullying behavior. If you are being bullied, it's important to take action to protect yourself.

1. **Stay calm:** Try to stay calm and avoid reacting emotionally to the bully's behavior. Bullies often try to provoke a reaction, so staying calm can help defuse the situation.
2. **Seek support:** Talk to someone you trust, such as a parent, teacher, counselor, or friend, about what is happening. They can offer you support and help you develop a plan to address the bullying.
3. **Set boundaries:** Clearly and assertively tell the bully that their behavior is not acceptable and that you will not tolerate it. It's important to be firm and consistent in setting and enforcing your boundaries.
4. **Document the bullying:** Keep a record of the bullying incidents, including dates, times, and details of what happened. This documentation can be helpful if you need to report the bullying to someone in authority.
5. **Report the bullying:** If the bullying is taking place at school or work, report it to a teacher, principal, supervisor, or HR department. If the bullying is happening online, report it to the website or platform where it is occurring. If the bullying is happening at home, seek help from a trusted adult, such as a teacher, school counselor, family friend, or relative. You can also reach out to a helpline or support service for advice on how to handle the situation.
6. **Take care of yourself:** Engage in activities that help you relax and de-stress, such as exercise, hobbies, or spending time with friends and family. It's important to take care of your mental and emotional well-being during this challenging time.
7. **Seek professional help:** If the bullying is causing you significant distress or impacting your mental health, consider seeking help from a mental health professional who can offer you support and guidance.

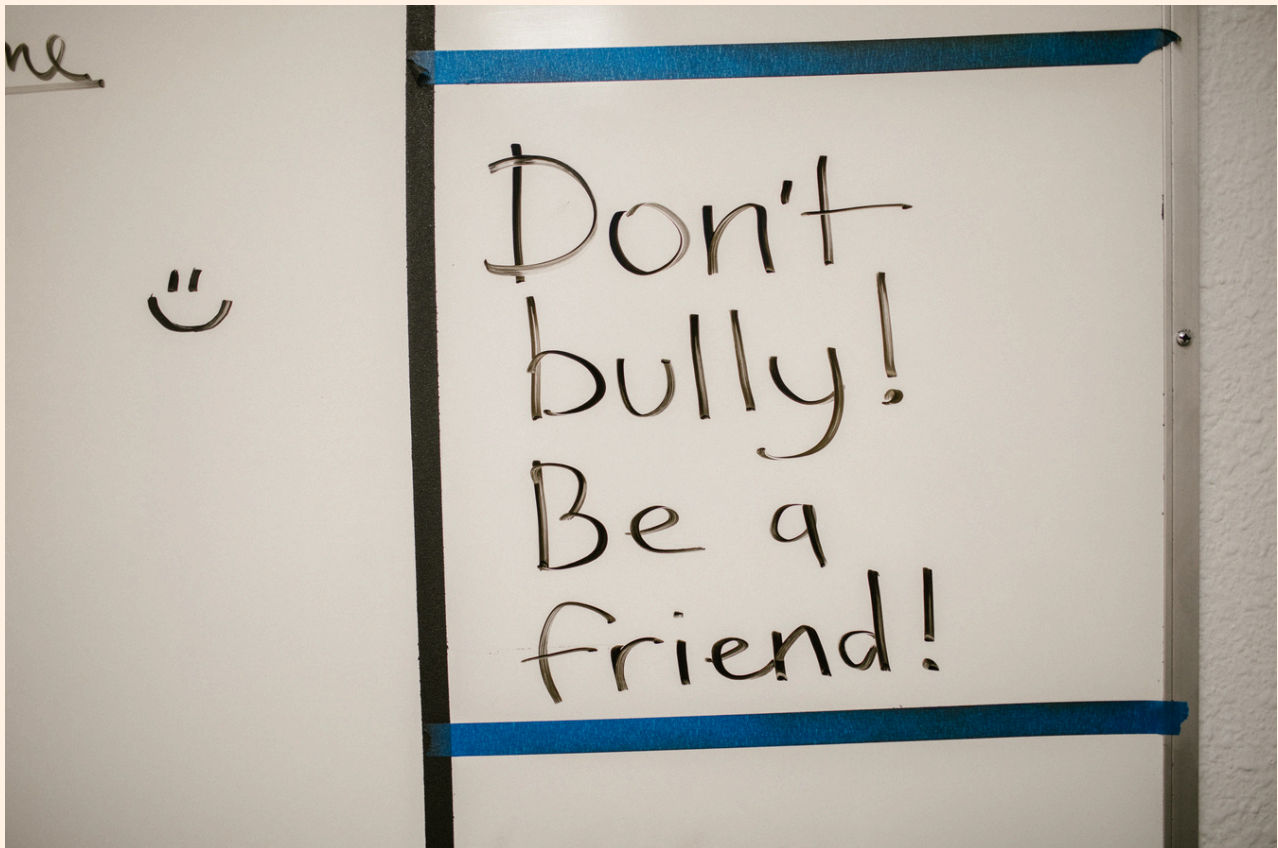
Important Resources

If you need immediate help, dial 911

9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline

24/7 mental health line: [604.951.8855](tel:604.951.8855) | [1.877.820.7444](tel:1.877.820.7444)

Kids Help Phone: Call 1-800-668-6868 (toll-free) or text CONNECT to 686868.



What to do if you Witness Someone Being Bullied

You can play an important role in stopping bullying around you. You have the power to intervene and stop bullying behavior, support the person being bullied, and create a culture of kindness and respect. By speaking up against bullying for your friends, peers, family, and really anyone around you, you send a clear message that such behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. You also have the opportunity to provide support and comfort to those who are being bullied, helping them feel less isolated and alone. You can also help educate others about the impact of bullying and promote empathy and understanding in their communities.

Be Safe!

Before intervening in a bullying situation, it's important to ensure your own safety. Assess the situation carefully to determine if it is safe for you to intervene directly. If the bullying involves physical violence or poses a risk to your safety, it may be best to seek help from a trusted adult or authority figure or call 911 instead of intervening directly. Additionally, consider your relationship with the individuals involved and whether your intervention could escalate the situation. It is very important to prioritize your safety and well-being while also taking action to help those who are being bullied.



Some Steps You Can Take



Stay calm and assess the situation: Try to remain calm and assess the situation to determine the best course of action.

Offer support: Approach the person being bullied and offer your support. Let them know that you are there to help and that they are not alone.

Speak up: If it is safe to do so, speak up against the bullying behavior. Let the bully know that their behavior is not acceptable and that it needs to stop. You may also use nonverbal communication to communicate disapproval. Facial expressions like frowning or narrowing eyes, along with body language such as crossing arms, turning away, or avoiding eye contact can convey displeasure. Gestures like shaking your head, as well as maintaining a rigid or tense posture, can also signal disapproval. Additionally, increasing physical distance from the person can indicate discomfort or disapproval. These nonverbal cues can be subtle yet effective ways to communicate your feelings without verbalizing them directly.

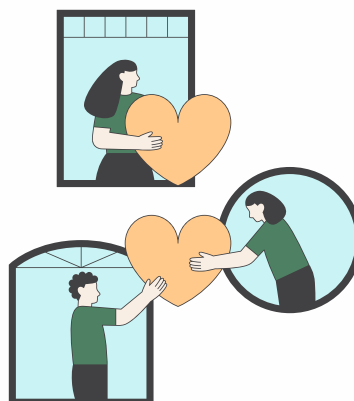
Get help: If the bullying continues or escalates, seek help from a trusted adult, such as a teacher, counselor, or parent. They can intervene and address the situation effectively.

Provide comfort: Offer comfort and reassurance to the person being bullied. Let them know that they are valued and that the bullying is not their fault.

Report the bullying: Report the bullying to a teacher, school administrator, or other authority figure. Provide them with details of the incident and any evidence you may have.

Follow up: Check in with the person being bullied to see how they are doing and offer continued support. Bullying can have lasting effects, so it's important to show ongoing care and concern.

Form more information and resources, please check here:



Impacts of Bullying

Bullying can have serious effects on your health, especially if you keep it to yourself. Many children and youth who are bullied do not talk about it because they are afraid or embarrassed. But keeping it inside can make things harder.

- Bullying can lead to feelings of sadness, anxiety, and low self-esteem that can persist into adulthood.
- It can cause struggles with forming and maintaining relationships, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- When you are bullied, it can change how you react to threatening situations.
- Being bullied can interfere with a person's ability to concentrate and perform well in school, leading to academic challenges.
- Some people who have been bullied may exhibit behavioral problems such as aggression, impulsivity, or self-harm.
- Bullying has been linked to an increased risk of developing mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Bullying can also make it hard to get along with others. You might feel like pulling away from friends and family, which can make you feel even more alone and make it hard to trust people.
- Being bullied can also take a toll on your body. It can give you headaches, stomachaches, and disrupt your sleep. In severe cases, it might even lead to health problems later on.



SIGNS OF BULLYING

Be aware that not all children who are bullied will show these warning signs:



How to Help

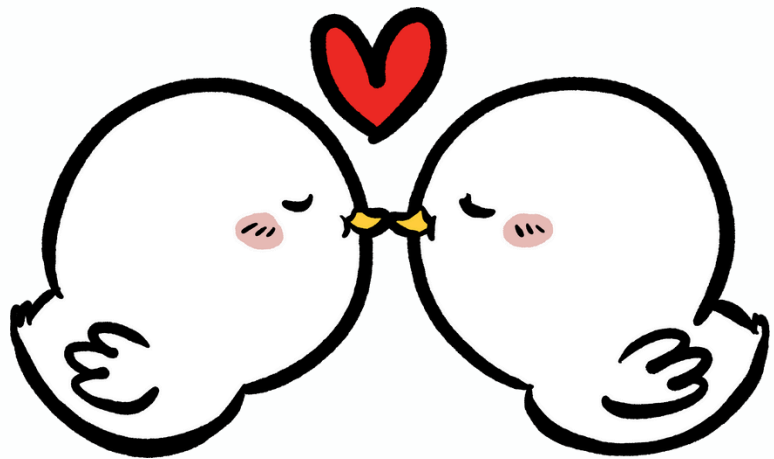
Act immediately. Stay calm and model respectful behavior. Get police help or medical attention immediately if:

- A weapon is involved.
- There are threats of serious physical injury.
- There are threats of hate-motivated violence.
- There is sexual abuse.
- Anyone is accused of an illegal act, such as robbery or extortion.

Learn more at stopbullying.gov

Chapter 5

Healthy Sexual Relationships



Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Recognize and recall the key components of healthy sexual relationships, including communication, respect, and consent.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of consent in sexual relationships, including the age of consent laws in their region.
3. Apply the concept of consent to various scenarios to determine if it is present or lacking.
4. Analyze the factors that can influence consent, such as power dynamics, coercion, and intoxication.
5. Evaluate the impact of unhealthy sexual relationships on individuals and communities.
6. Create strategies for promoting healthy sexual relationships and preventing sexual violence in their communities.
7. Reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs about consent and healthy sexual relationships.

Healthy Sexual Relationships

Sex encompasses a range of physical, emotional, and social experiences related to sexual activity, intimacy, and reproduction. It is not just about intercourse and penetration! Sexual activities that do not involve intercourse are often referred to as "non-penetrative sex." These activities include but are not limited to:

- Kissing and making out: This involves kissing, touching, and caressing each other's bodies in a sensual way.
- Oral sex: This involves using the mouth, lips, and tongue to stimulate a partner's genitals.
- Mutual masturbation: This involves stimulating each other's genitals manually or with the help of sex toys.
- Erotic massage: This involves using massage techniques to stimulate erogenous zones on the body for sexual pleasure.
- Sensual touching: This involves touching and caressing each other's bodies in a way that feels good and increases arousal.
- Role-playing and fantasy: This involves acting out sexual fantasies or scenarios to enhance arousal and intimacy.



Many young people today learn about sex from online pornography, which can present unrealistic and unhealthy portrayals of sexual behavior. Learning about sex from pornography often leads to misconceptions about sex and relationships. It may also promote unrealistic expectations regarding body image, performance, and consent.

In contrast, reliable resources, such as educational websites, books, and trusted adults, provide accurate and comprehensive information about sex, including topics like anatomy, reproductive health, consent, and healthy relationships. These resources emphasize respect, communication, and understanding, which are essential for developing healthy attitudes towards sex and relationships.



Healthy Relationships in Sex!

Healthy sexual relationships are built on trust, communication, and mutual respect. It's like a dance where both partners move in sync, understanding each other's desires and boundaries. In a healthy sexual relationship, consent is always enthusiastic and freely given, with both partners feeling comfortable and safe to express their needs and preferences. Communication is key, whether it's discussing likes and dislikes, practicing safer sex, or addressing any concerns or uncertainties. Trust plays a vital role, allowing both partners to feel secure and valued in their intimacy. Overall, a healthy sexual relationship is a space where pleasure, respect, and understanding flourish, enriching the connection between partners and promoting emotional and physical well-being.



Photo Credit: Hands of Hope

Before Having Sex

Remember that you have the right to make decisions about your own body and sexual health. Also, you don't want to hurt anyone! Take the time to educate yourself, communicate openly, and prioritize your well-being in all sexual interactions.

1. Understand consent: Learn what consent means and why it's crucial in any sexual activity. Consent should be enthusiastic, ongoing, and freely given by all parties involved.
2. Know your rights: Educate yourself about your rights regarding sexual health, including access to contraception methods, STI (sexually transmitted infection) testing, and information about sexual health resources.
3. Practice safer sex: Use condoms and other forms of contraception to protect against pregnancy and STIs. Safer sex practices are essential for your health and well-being.
4. Communicate openly: Be willing to have honest and open conversations with your partner about sexual desires, boundaries, and expectations. Effective communication is key to a healthy sexual relationship.
5. Respect boundaries: Respect your partner's boundaries and communicate your own clearly. It's essential to establish and maintain boundaries that feel comfortable and safe for both partners.



6. Seek reliable information: Be critical of the information you receive about sex and relationships. Seek out reliable sources, such as reputable websites, books, or trusted adults, for accurate information about sexual health. For example, instead of relying on social media or random websites, you can look for information on reputable sites like Amaze (<https://amaze.org/us/>) and Planned Parenthood (<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/parents/sex-and-sexuality>). Talking to a trusted adult is also a very good idea, as you could discuss your questions or concerns about sex and relationships with a parent, guardian, teacher, or counselor who can provide accurate information and guidance. There is no shame in asking questions! Your sexuality is nothing to be ashamed of. You can also seek out books or articles written by experts in sexual health and relationships to gain a deeper understanding of the topics, and participate in educational workshops or seminars on sexual health and relationships to learn from professionals in the field. And if you have specific questions about sexual health, consider talking to a healthcare provider, such as a doctor or nurse, who can provide medical advice and resources.

Before Having Sex

7. Get tested: If you're sexually active or considering becoming sexually active, get tested regularly for STIs. Many STIs can be asymptomatic (which means there is no symptom!), so testing is crucial for your health and the health of your partners. Also you should get vaccinated for STIs. For more information, see: <https://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/sexual-health/protect-yourself-against-stis/vaccines-for-stis>

8. Consider your emotions: Understand that sex can have emotional implications, and it's okay to take things slow or wait until you feel ready. Make decisions about sexual activity based on your own comfort level and emotional readiness. No one has a right to rush you into doing things you are not ready for.

9. Know where to go for help: Familiarize yourself with sexual health resources available to you, such as school counselors, healthcare providers, or community organizations. These resources can provide support, information, and assistance if needed.

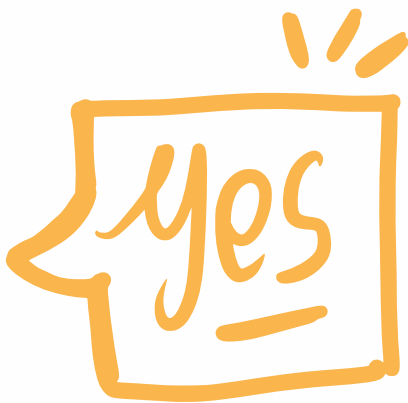
10. Trust your instincts: Trust your instincts and prioritize your own well-being in any sexual situation. If something doesn't feel right or you're unsure, it's okay to say no and remove yourself from the situation.



Age of Consent to Sexual Activity in Canada: At Least 16

In many places, the age of consent is a legal concept that determines the age at which a person is considered old enough to willingly engage in sexual activity. In Canada, this age is at least 16, but it can be younger if all parties involved are around the same age and there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency or any other exploitation of the young person. However, when there is a significant age difference- five years or more for 14 or 15 year olds and two years or more for 12 and 13 year olds- the older person is often seen as having more influence and power over the younger person. In such cases, the relationship may potentially be exploitative and is considered non-consensual, even if the younger person appears to consent. Any sexual activity with a person under the age of 16 is a criminal offence if the partner is older than the allowed age difference.

For more information, check out here:



- Consent only counts if the person is completely sober and fully understands what they are agreeing to and if they are able to consent.
- Consent needs to be given from all people involved
- All parties can change their minds **AT ANYTIME** (whether it is in regards to sexual activity or consenting to something else).
- **YOU** choose who you want to have sex with
- **YOU** choose what sexual activities **YOU** are willing to do
- **YOU** choose what birth control **YOU** want to use



Consent DOES NOT Count if:

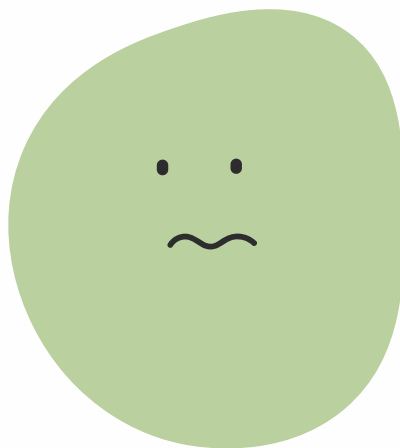
- If someone else gives consent for you
- If the person you are getting consent from is under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- When the person trying to get consent is forcing the other person by abusing a position of trust, power or authority
- When the other person either verbally or through actions show that they do not want to have sex or perform a sexual activity
- When someone who initially consented either verbally or through actions shows they do not want to continue
- When you are a minor and your partner is older than you by more than the legally permissible age difference

No!!



Stealthing

Removing a condom non-consensually, also known as "stealthing," is when one person removes a condom during sex without the other person's knowledge or consent. This is a form of sexual assault and is considered a violation of trust and boundaries. It can increase the risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and is a serious breach of consent. Consent is an ongoing agreement between all parties involved in a sexual encounter, and any modification or removal of protection without explicit consent is a violation of that agreement. It's important for individuals to communicate openly and respect each other's boundaries and decisions regarding safer sex practices.



About Consent...



an everyday feminism comic
 Visit us at: everydayfeminism.com

Photo Credit: Everyday Feminism

Chapter 6

Internet Safety



Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Recall the definitions of cyberbullying, sextortion, and grooming.
2. Understand the risks and consequences associated with cyberbullying, sextortion, unsafe sexting, and grooming.
3. Apply strategies to protect oneself from cyberbullying, sextortion, unsafe sexting, and grooming.
4. Analyze scenarios to identify signs of cyberbullying, sextortion, unsafe sexting, and grooming.
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches to prevent and respond to problems such as cyberbullying, sextortion, unsafe sexting, and grooming.
6. Create a personal safety plan for online interactions.
7. Reflect on the impact of online behaviors on oneself and others, and consider how to promote a safer online environment.

Internet Safety

Internet safety is very important in today's digital age, where we rely heavily on online platforms for communication, information, and entertainment. It's like wearing a seatbelt in a car—it helps protect you from potential dangers. By practicing internet safety, you can safeguard your personal information, prevent cyberbullying, and avoid falling victim to scams or fraud. Additionally, being mindful of the content you share online can help protect your reputation and prevent unwanted consequences. Ultimately, internet safety is about taking control of your online experience and ensuring that you can navigate the digital world safely and confidently.



What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place online or through digital devices. It involves using technology, such as social media, text messages, or online forums, to harass, threaten, or intimidate others. Cyberbullying can take many forms, including spreading rumors, sharing embarrassing photos or videos, or sending hurtful messages. It can have serious consequences for the victim, including emotional distress, low self-esteem, and even depression. Cyberbullying is harmful and unacceptable behavior, and it's important for everyone to know how to protect themselves and seek help if they experience or witness it.

Some tips for preventing cyberbullying

1. Be mindful of what you share: Think twice before posting something online. Avoid sharing personal information or anything that could be used to harass or embarrass you. Also, avoid storing your personal information and personal/intimate materials on your phone or somewhere that may be accessed by others.
2. Use privacy settings: Adjust the privacy settings on your social media accounts to control who can see your posts and information. Make sure your GPS is not on and your Location is not visible. Do not accept “share location” requests from websites and apps. If you need to share your location with an app, choose the “only when using the app” option.
3. Think before you click: Be cautious of clicking on links or downloading attachments from unknown sources, as they could contain malicious content.
4. Keep your passwords safe: Use strong, unique passwords for your online accounts and never share them with anyone.
5. Block and report: If you experience cyberbullying, block the person responsible and report their behavior to the platform or website.
6. Talk to someone: If you're being cyberbullied, don't keep it to yourself. Talk to a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, or counselor, for support and guidance.
7. Be kind online: Treat others with respect and kindness online, just as you would in person. Avoid engaging in behavior that could be hurtful or harmful to others.



Sextortion

Sextortion is a form of blackmail that involves the use of sexual images or videos to extort money, sexual favors, or other benefits from someone. The perpetrator typically obtains explicit images or videos of someone either through coercion, deception, or hacking into their devices. They then use these materials to threaten the person, often by threatening to share the images or videos publicly unless their demands are met.



Some Tips for Preventing Sextortion

1. Be cautious about who you share personal information with online, especially intimate photos or videos.
2. Use strong, unique passwords for your online accounts and enable two-factor authentication when possible.
3. Be wary of unsolicited requests for personal information or images.
4. Keep your devices secure by regularly updating software and using reputable antivirus software.
5. If you receive a sextortion threat, do not respond to the blackmailer and report the incident to the authorities immediately.
6. Educate yourself and others about the risks of sextortion and the importance of online safety.





Learn more about sextortion and how to prevent and address it here:



Learn about what to do if you are a survivor of sextortion here:



SEXTORTION
RED FLAGS

- Person does not have a working camera
- Conversation does not add up
- Person turns conversations to "adult" right away
- Profile has limited photos
- Use of fear tactics
- Misspelled words in profile
- Profile has low followers/friends
- Fast-paced contact

More information at police.msu.edu

Photo Credit: Michigan State University.

Stay Safe Online!



Photo Credit: VPN Overview

Sexting

Sexting is the act of sending or receiving sexually suggestive messages, photos, or videos, typically through digital devices like smartphones or computers. It's a form of expression that some people use to explore their sexuality or maintain intimacy in relationships. However, it's important to be aware that sexting can also have risks, such as privacy concerns if messages or images are shared without consent. Therefore, it's essential to consider the potential consequences and to communicate openly with partners about boundaries and comfort levels.

Keeping sexting safe involves several important steps:

1. **Consent:** Never ever share someone's content without their explicit consent. Never send someone sexually explicit material without their consent.
2. **Privacy:** Use secure messaging apps or platforms that offer end-to-end encryption to protect your privacy, and use the option where the app deletes your messages after your partner has viewed them. In such private settings, the app usually lets you know if the person has taken a screenshot of your content.
3. **Trust:** Only sext with people you trust and who have demonstrated respect for your boundaries.
4. **Boundaries:** Set clear boundaries about what you're comfortable sharing and respect your partner's boundaries as well.
5. **Safety measures:** Avoid including identifying information in photos or videos, such as your face, tattoos, or recognizable background.
6. **Delete responsibly:** If you decide to delete sexts, make sure to do so securely to prevent them from being recovered.
7. **Communication:** Keep open communication with your partner about your feelings, boundaries, and any concerns that arise.

It's important to recognize that sexting, if not done safely and consensually, can have serious consequences. In some cases, people have experienced bullying or coercion as a result of sexting. For example, someone might use explicit images or messages to blackmail or manipulate others into doing things they're not comfortable with. This can lead to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and isolation, which can be incredibly harmful to one's mental health. In extreme cases, individuals who have been bullied or coerced through sexting have experienced such intense emotional distress that they have considered or even attempted suicide. It's crucial to prioritize your safety and well-being when engaging in any form of online communication and to seek help if you feel overwhelmed or threatened.

It is always a good idea to know if what you are doing is legal or a crime. To know about the laws regarding sexting, nudes, and sexual activities regarding your age you can check here:



Grooming



Grooming is a process used by abusers to gain the trust and cooperation of their victims, usually to prepare for future abuse. It typically involves building a relationship with the victim through positive attention, gifts, or emotional manipulation. The goal of grooming is to establish a sense of trust and closeness with the victim, making it easier for the abuser to exploit them later on. Grooming can occur in various contexts, including in-person and online, and can target individuals of any age. It's important to be aware of the signs of grooming and to seek help if you suspect that someone is being groomed or abused.

Online grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a child or young person online, with the intention of sexually abusing them. Groomers use the internet to manipulate and exploit their victims, often by pretending to be someone they are not, such as a peer or a caring adult. They may use flattery, gifts, or threats to gain the child's trust and persuade them to engage in sexual activities. Online grooming can take place on social media, messaging apps, online games, or any platform where children and young people interact online. It's very important to be aware of this and block the groomer as soon as you see the first signs and report the situation to a trusted adult.



Signs that someone may be grooming youth online can include:



1. Excessive attention: The groomer may give the child or young person a lot of attention, compliments, or gifts to make them feel special.
2. Secrecy: The groomer may try to keep the relationship secret from parents or caregivers, asking the child or young person not to tell anyone about their interactions.
3. Isolation: The groomer may try to isolate the child or young person from their family and friends, making them feel like they can only rely on the groomer for support.
4. Manipulation: The groomer may use emotional manipulation or guilt to control the child or young person, making them feel like they owe the groomer something in return for their attention or gifts.
5. Sexualized behavior: The groomer may gradually introduce sexual content into their interactions with the child or young person, testing their boundaries and desensitizing them to inappropriate behavior.
6. Control: The groomer may try to control the child or young person's behavior, such as by monitoring their online activity or pressuring them to do things they are not comfortable with.
7. Warning signs: Survivors of grooming may display signs of distress or unusual behavior, such as withdrawing from family and friends, being secretive about their online activity, or suddenly receiving gifts or money from someone they met online. If you notice these signs in someone you know, don't hesitate to reach out to a trusted adult for help.

If you are experiencing cyberbullying, whether it is sexual or not, there are several steps you can take to address the situation:

1. Don't respond: Avoid responding to the cyberbully, as this can often escalate the situation.
2. Save the evidence: Keep records of the bullying messages or posts, including dates, times, and any relevant screenshots.
3. Block the bully: Use privacy settings to block the bully from contacting you or viewing your profile.
4. Report the bullying: Report the cyberbullying to the relevant platform or website. Most social media platforms and websites have reporting tools for this purpose.
5. Talk to a trusted adult: Reach out to a parent, teacher, counselor, or other trusted adult for support and guidance.
6. Seek help: If you are feeling overwhelmed or distressed, consider seeking help from a mental health professional or counselor.
7. Take care of yourself: Practice self-care by engaging in activities that help you feel calm and relaxed, such as exercise, hobbies, or spending time with friends and family.

It's important to remember that being targeted online is not your fault, and there are people who can help you navigate this difficult situation. You do not deserve to be bullied. No one does.



Chapter 7

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



Objectives

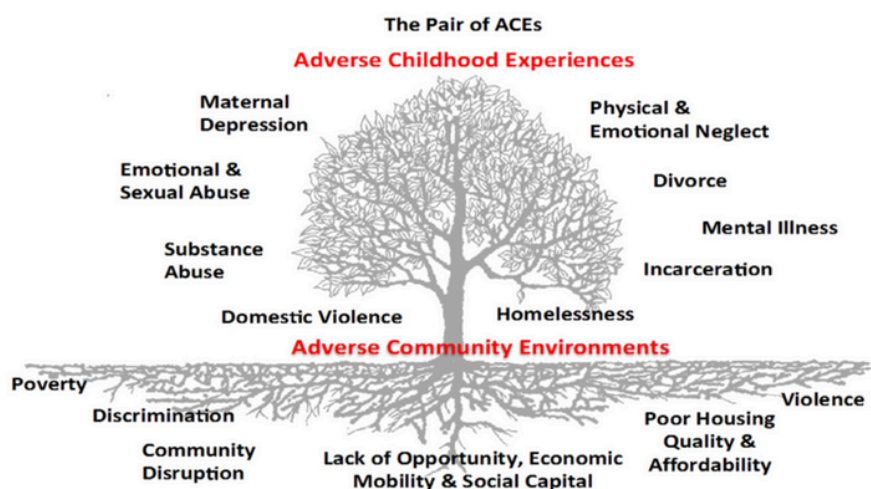
By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

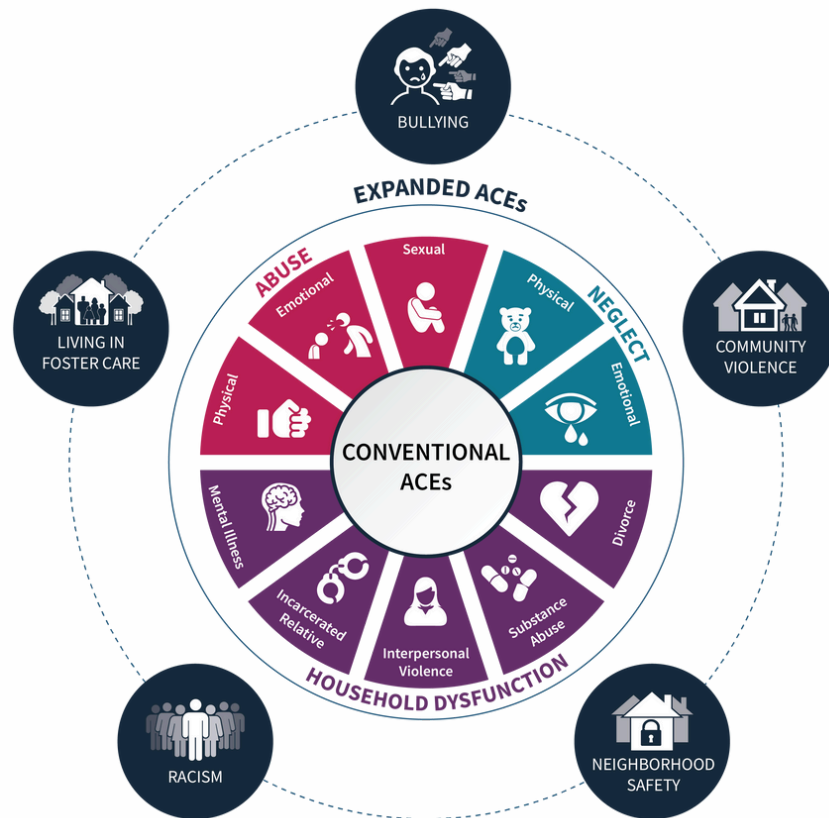
1. Recall the definition of ACEs and examples of adverse experiences.
2. Understand the impact of ACEs on mental and physical health.
3. Apply strategies for mitigating the effects of ACEs and promoting resilience.
4. Analyze the relationship between ACEs and the development of coping mechanisms and behaviours.
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and support systems for individuals affected by ACEs.
6. Create a plan for creating healing practices for yourself and others around you.
7. Reflect on personal experiences and biases related to ACEs and consider ways to support individuals impacted by ACEs.

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are negative things that happen to people when they are under the age of 18. These experiences can include things like being hurt or abused, living in a home where there is violence, or having a family member who has a problem with drugs or alcohol. ACEs can also include things like having parents who are divorced or separated, experiencing poverty, or feeling like you are not loved or cared for. These experiences can be really hard and can affect how kids feel and behave as they grow up. It's important to know that it's not your fault if you have experienced ACEs and that there are people who can help you feel better.

Adverse Childhood Experiences extend beyond traditional categories to include factors like exposure to racism, living in war zones, and growing up in low-income neighborhoods. These experiences can significantly impact a child's development and well-being, leading to long-term effects on physical and mental health. Children exposed to racism may face discrimination and prejudice, leading to feelings of inferiority and increased stress levels. Growing up in war zones can result in trauma, fear, and a sense of instability. Living in low-income neighborhoods can expose children to violence, substance use, and limited access to resources, affecting their overall quality of life and future opportunities. Addressing these expanded ACEs requires a holistic approach that considers the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors that contribute to childhood adversity.





Source: Cronholm, P. F., Forke, C. M., Wade, R., Bair-Merritt, M. H., Davis, M., Harkins-Schwarz, M., Pachter, L. M., & Fein, J. A. (2015). Adverse childhood experiences: Expanding the concept of adversity. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 49(3), 354–361.

Impacts of ACEs

When bad things happen to us when we are young, like having parents who fight a lot, experiencing violence, or feeling like we are not safe, it can have long-lasting effects as we grow up. These experiences can make us feel scared, stressed, sad, or angry. They can also make it hard for us to trust others or feel good about ourselves. As we get older, ACEs can lead to problems with our health, like feeling sick more often or having trouble sleeping. They can also make it harder for us to do well in school or get along with others.

For more information about ACEs and their consequences, you can check this website out:



Adverse Childhood Experiences have been linked to an increased risk of engaging in or experiencing relationship violence later in life. When someone experiences ACEs, such as abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction, they are more likely to develop poor coping mechanisms and difficulties in managing emotions, which can contribute to unhealthy relationship dynamics. They may also internalize the negative behaviors and patterns of communication they witnessed or experienced, leading to a higher likelihood of perpetuating or tolerating abusive behavior in relationships. Additionally, ACEs can impact brain development and increase the risk of mental health issues, substance abuse, and low self-esteem, all of which can contribute to an increased vulnerability to relationship violence. Recognizing the impact of ACEs and providing appropriate support and interventions can help break the cycle of violence and promote healthy relationships.

Substance Use

When we feel stressed, our bodies and minds can react in different ways. Stress can come from many things, like school, relationships, or problems at home. When we experience a lot of stress, it can be hard to cope, and some people might turn to substances like alcohol or drugs to try to feel better. This can be especially true for people who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences. When people use substances to cope with stress, it can sometimes lead to problems with addiction or other health issues. Also, while it may provide a temporary relief, our bodies and minds will feel even worse once the effects of the substance wear off. It's important to find healthy ways to cope with stress, like talking to someone you trust, practicing relaxation techniques, or engaging in activities you enjoy.



Peer Bullying and ACEs

Peer bullying can be a form of Adverse Childhood Experiences because it can have lasting negative effects on a child's mental and emotional well-being. When people are bullied by their peers, they may experience feelings of fear, shame, and isolation, which can impact their self-esteem and mental health. Bullying can also lead to feelings of powerlessness and helplessness, which are common characteristics of ACEs. Additionally, being bullied by peers can create a hostile and unsafe environment, which can contribute to a range of negative outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and even substance abuse. That is why it is really important to recognize and address peer bullying, so that we have a safe and supportive environment for everyone.

Well... I have had some bad experiences. Now what?

The damages of Adverse Childhood Experiences can be undone, and healing is possible with the right support and interventions.

- One important factor in healing from ACEs is building resilience, which involves developing coping skills, social support networks, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life.
- Therapy, counseling, and support groups can also be beneficial in helping people process their experiences and develop healthier coping mechanisms.
- Creating a safe and stable environment is essential for healing from ACEs. This can include establishing routines, setting boundaries, and surrounding oneself with supportive and understanding people
- Practicing self-care and prioritizing mental and emotional well-being can help people heal from the effects of ACEs and move forward in a positive and healthy way.

To know more about how to reduce the effects of stress and adverse childhood experience, you can also check these resources with many informative tips and explanations:



Appendix

Community Resources





Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Community Services Recovery Fund

