

[7.01: This lesson plan was written for the Successfully Teaching MS Health Manual.]

Grade 7, Objective 3.05

Compare and contrast a healthy vs. unhealthy relationship.

Materials Needed:

Appendix 1 - copies of Qualities You Seek in a Friend
Card stock or slips of paper cut into 1" x 2" squares (12 for each student)
Appendix 2 – transparency of Key Words for Qualities You Seek in a Friend
Appendix 3 – transparency of Relationship Timeline
Appendix 4 – copies of My Relationships
Appendix 5 – transparency of I Messages
Appendix 6 – copies of How I Feel
Appendix 7 – transparency of the Art of Friendship

Review:

*Who in your life do you have relationships with?
Do these relationships differ? How are they different?*

Focus:

This activity encourages students to consider the qualities they value in a friend. Give each student a copy of the handout, Qualities You Seek in a Friend (Appendix 1) and 12 one-inch by two-inch cards.

I am going to describe several qualities that may be desirable in a friend. Hopefully, some of your friends and acquaintances have these traits. [You will give them the key word and read the description.] If you value this trait in your friends, write the key word on one of your cards and place it on your sheet.

Some rules to follow:

You will have to decide where to place the key word based on how important that quality is to them. Box #1 is the most important quality you want in a friend, and box #12 is the least important quality.

You will decide 11 of the traits to list on your card and then will have one wild card to write another characteristic. Once you place a card, you cannot move it until I say you can.

Cover up and display the transparency of Key Words for Qualities You Seek Activity (Appendix 2) one at a time, as they are described.

The qualities are:

- *trustworthy*: Honors their word and keeps promises. Never dishonest. Can be trusted with your belongings.

- *assertive*: Stands up for him/herself and others in a respectful manner.
- *maturity*: Doesn't act like a young child. Can handle disappointment without having a temper tantrum. Can express anger or frustration without screaming or throwing things.
- *dependable*: You can rely on him/her regardless of the circumstances.
- *fun to be with*: Has a good sense of humor. Playful, laid-back, easy-going. Doesn't take himself/herself too seriously. Able to laugh at himself/herself. Knows how to have fun.

Tell students:

We are half-way.

- *You may rearrange the ones you have to suit yourself.*
- *Look at the papers of the people around you.*
- *Does anyone's sheet look like yours? What does that mean? (People value different qualities in relationships.)*

Let's continue:

- *honest*: Tells the truth. Doesn't accept a lie from others.
- *popular*: Everyone knows and likes them. Talented. Always chosen for group activities.
- *can keep a secret*: Will not repeat things that have been told in confidence. Keeps personal things personal. Knows the difference between private and public information.
- *respectful*: Treats others fairly. Values others and their opinions and shows them. Embraces differences.
- *good listener/communicator*: Cares about what you are saying. Listens carefully. Can tell you how they feel.
- *kind to others*: Does not hurt or belittle others. Offers help when people are sad or hurt. Makes you feel good about yourself.

Students can now use the wild card and write down any trait that has not been mentioned.

Ask several students to share their wild card traits.

Have students rearrange cards again. When students are comfortable with the order, they are to copy the words from the cards onto the Qualities You Seek In A Friend handout (Appendix 1).

Ask students:

1. *Will you consider these qualities the next time you are making a friend?*
2. *Does your paper look exactly like everyone else's? Why not?*
3. *How can you tell if a person has the qualities that are important to you?*
4. *Will you still want the same qualities in a friend when you are 18? 25? Why? Why not?*
5. *How many of these qualities do you have?*

Statement of Objectives:

We have just looked at the qualities we want in our friends. Hopefully we also display those qualities to others. Today we are going to compare and contrast healthy versus unhealthy relationships.

Teacher Input:

As we go through life, we “belong” or are a part of different groups.

- *What are some of the groups that middle school students belong to? (family, sports teams, church groups, school clubs, band, strings, chorus, cheerleader squad, Boys and Girls Clubs)*
- *Do you have a circle of friends with whom you hang out?*
- *Is that a group?*
- *What are the advantages of belonging to a group? What do we get out of it? (a sense of belonging, support, practice working with others, getting to listen to others’ ideas and opinions, opportunity to learn more about ourselves, groups can accomplish more)*
- *What are the disadvantages of belonging to a group? (find it hard to work or accomplish goals by ourselves, rely on others to make all the decisions, don’t develop friendships outside of the group, pressure to engage in behaviors that are not healthy)*

Friendships are an important part of life. How do we develop friendships?

Display the Relationship Timeline transparency, Appendix 3, and discuss how a friendship can move from acquaintances to best friends.

Ask students:

- *How many best friends or confidants do you have?*
- *How many acquaintances do you have?*
- *Did your best friend start off as an acquaintance?*
- *How did that person become your best friend?*

- *Have you noticed a change in friendships now that you are in middle school?*
- *What needs do friendships provide for us?*

We've discussed many types of relationships so far. Many of our relationships are nurturing relationships. Nurturing relationships provide us with support and encouragement that promotes positive growth, and development. In addition, nurturing relationships help us to develop resiliency skills. Resiliency skills help us to prevent problems or to have the ability to bounce back and recover from difficult situations.

Let's look at the positive relationships that you have. Give students a copy of My Relationships (Appendix 4). Explain each set of directions as they complete the worksheet. For the last one, remind them to look back to the Qualities of Friendship activity and the qualities they could improve on that might help them develop more positive relationships.

Once they are finished, ask students: *How do these positive or nurturing relationships help you develop as an individual?* (These relationships help us to feel safe. We are more likely to try new things because we feel supported. We know they will help us when we face difficult situations.)

Ask students:

- *What can you do to improve relationships with the important people in your life?*
- *What can you do to develop more positive relationships?*

Guided Practice:

I want you to think about the people in your life with whom you have positive relationships.

- *Are those relationships positive all the time?*
- *Are your friendships positive/ healthy relationships all the time?*

We discussed some of the disadvantages of belonging to a group. This included letting others make all the decisions for you and the pressure to engage in behaviors that are against your values or are risky behaviors.

- *Can friends be guilty of these same behaviors?*
- *What can you do when your friend does try to make all the decisions?*
- *What can you do when your friend tries to pressure you to engage in a risky behavior?*
- *Are there other behaviors that friends can exhibit that would be considered a characteristic of an unhealthy relationship? (borrowing items from you and never returning them)*

Today, we are going to learn a communication skill that will help us explain how we feel when our friends take advantage of us or try to pressure us to act against our beliefs or values. We call these “I messages.” The goal of an “I message” is to tell an individual what behavior is bothering you and how it makes you feel and then how you want that person to act in the future.

Display the transparency, I Messages (Appendix 5). Go over the steps to an “I Message”. Give each student a copy of the handout, How I Feel (Appendix 6). Put students in pairs to allow them to work together, but tell each pair that they must write two different “I Messages,” not share just one.

When all students are finished with the worksheet, go through each of the examples. Ask students to volunteer to read their “I Messages.” Offer positive feedback on the parts they do correctly. Be sure that they include all three parts of the “I Message” statement. Offer suggestions on how to improve it and ask the class to offer suggestions.

When you are finished discussing the worksheet, tell students: *You did a good job writing the “I Messages”. Now, we are going to practice delivering these statements to another person.*

Put students in groups of three. Number them 1-3. *The number 1 will pick one of the situations from the How I Feel worksheet and practice saying it to the number 2 in your group. The number 3 is the observer and your job as an observer is to watch and give positive feedback to the person practicing the “I Message”.*

Remind them to use communication skills they learned in the 6th grade. Remind them that there are three types of communication skills: aggressive, assertive and passive.

Ask students:

Which form of communication skills is the most effective? (assertive)

What are the behaviors, verbal and nonverbal that you need to demonstrate when you use assertive communication skills?

- Be confident in your responses.
- Use strong body language and good posture.
- Speak clearly and use a firm tone of voice.
- Make eye contact.
- Use “I messages.”
- Avoid put-downs

Be sure that you use the skills when you are practicing your “I Message.”

After the first group practices, keep rotating their job assignments until they all have practiced. Conclude this activity by telling them: *Even though our relationships with friends are important, we need to be able to recognize when these relationships become unhealthy for us as individuals. When that happens, you need to be able to express yourself through the use of “I Feel” statements so that your friend understands why you do not want to engage in that behavior.*

Independent Practice:

Display The Art of Friendship transparency (Appendix 7). Assign a journal activity.

Look back at the Qualities of Friendship activity we started class with today.

- *Which of these qualities do you bring into a friendship?*
- *Which of these qualities would you like to improve?*
- *In the future, how will you handle unhealthy relationships?*

Closure:

You did a good job recognizing the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy relationship and learning a new communication skill to help you deal with situations that could occur with your friends.

QUALITIES YOU SEEK IN A FRIEND

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Key Words for Qualities You Seek Activity

Trustworthy	Honest
Assertive	Popular
Maturity	Can keep a secret
Fun to be with	Respectful
Dependable	Good listener/communicator
	Kind to others



Relationship Timeline

ACQUAINTANCE

FRIEND

CLOSE FRIEND

BEST FRIEND

Time

Shared
Experiences

Traits
You Value

Common
Interests

Relationship
Chemistry

My Relationships



Directions:

Think of all the people in your life with whom you have relationships. This would include parents or guardians, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, teacher, coach, or a friend.

1. Write in the bubble the names of those with whom you have positive relationships.

2. Write the names of those with whom you want to have positive relationships.

3. On the back, list persons with whom you want to have a positive relationship and one thing that you could do to help develop that positive relationship.

"I Messages"

An "I Message" is made up of three parts:

- 1. Describe the behavior that is bothering you.**
- 2. Tell the individual how it makes you feel.**
- 3. Tell the individual how you would like for them to act in the future.**



How I Feel...

Directions: Write an “I Message” for each of the following situations. Remember there are three parts to an “I Message.”

1. Your best friend started smoking over the summer. Over the last month, every time you are together, she tries to get you to smoke too. You don't want to start smoking cigarettes, but the last time she pressured you was outside the mall with a bunch of your friends around.

2. You loaned one of your friends your favorite CD. You keep reminding him/her to return your CD. When he/she finally gives it back, the CD has so many scratches that it will not play.

3. Your group of friends has been picking on and making fun of another student in your grade. He told the teacher that your group had been bullying him, and some of your friends got into trouble. Your group makes a plan to get even. You have P.E. class with this student and they want you to accuse him/her of stealing from you. One of your other friends is going to be “the witness” to the theft.



*“The first step in the art of friendship is
to be a friend;
then making friends
takes care of itself.”*

Wilfred A. Peterson