

**9.01 [This lesson is 3.05 in the manual, Successfully Teaching HS Health.]**  
**High School, Objective 3.05**  
**Formulate principles for healthy dating.**

**Materials Needed:**

Index cards

Appendix 1 – transparency of Dating Principles

Appendix 2 – Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationship Behaviors (slips cut apart)

Appendix 3 – copies of Dating Contract

Appendix 4 – copies of Go Out, Have Fun, Date, and Be Safe

Poster board, markers, contact paper, construction paper, newsprint, arts and craft materials

**Review:**

Explain to students that dating can be a rewarding and fun experience. In order to get the most out of dating experiences, students need to use effective communication to convey expectations to their dating partners and should know their rights and responsibilities concerning dating.

- Divide the students into four or five heterogeneous groups. Distribute index cards with the following questions to each group.
  1. What do girls look for in a boy?
  2. What do boys look for in a girl?
  3. What behaviors on a date might make you feel uncomfortable? Why?
  4. Who should pay for a date? Why?
- Ask each group to choose a recorder to take notes on the main points discussed by the group and a reporter who will read the results of the group's discussion of each question. Allow 10-15 minutes for the groups to discuss the questions. Ask each reporter to describe the answers their groups came up with to the entire class.
- Process the activity by asking students if they were surprised by any of the answers that they heard. Explain that effective communication about relationships and dating can help students avoid unpleasant surprises and experiences.

**Focus:**

- Read the following story from an anonymous female author to the class. Be sure to tell the students that although this story is written by a female about her male abusive partner, unhealthy relationships can happen to boys, girls, and within opposite and same sex relationships.

*It started off like most relationships do. He was nice, good looking, and seemed to be interested in a lot of the things I was. Everything was going great for awhile until he started getting overly concerned with where I was going and who I was spending time with.*

*I didn't mind so much at first because I figured that he must really love me to be so worried about me all the time. But then, he began criticizing my clothes, telling me that I was dressing too "sexy" and accused me of flirting with other guys. He started getting jealous any time I wanted to go out with my friends, and he even accused me of cheating. We were arguing all the time and I began feeling like I couldn't do anything right anymore.*

*Sometimes he would get so mad that I worried he might hit me. Luckily, he never did. The interesting thing is that I thought that abuse just meant violence. I learned later that abuse can mean a lot of things.*

*The criticism never stopped and we eventually broke up because I realized that in his eyes, I would never be good enough.*

*I was lucky, because a lot of people involved in emotionally abusive relationships don't realize it until it escalates out of control. I learned that sometimes, abuse can even feel like love.*

- Process the story with the class by having the student take out their health journals and free write for five minutes. Have students use the following sentence starters as the basis of the writing exercise:
  - I feel . . .
  - I wonder . . .
  - I can relate . . .
- Let those who want to, share their responses. Discuss the story as a class. Some suggested questions are:
  - *Can abusive relationships happen in teen relationships?*
  - *What behaviors listed in the story can be considered unhealthy?*
  - *Why do you think the author stayed with her boyfriend after he began treating her so badly?*

### **Statement of Objectives:**

*So far in this unit we have been discussing relationships. Today we are going to discuss healthy dating relationships. By the end of the lesson, you will be able to describe a healthy relationship, recognize behaviors that may be considered unhealthy, and describe principles for healthy dating relationships.*

### **Teacher Input:**

*Dating violence is defined as a threat or act of violence against one member of a dating relationship by the other member of the dating relationship. This includes acts of sexual violence, physical abuse, as well as verbal and/or emotional abuse. When most people think about dating/domestic violence they immediately think of adult victims. However, this issue affects teenagers also. (Examples: lying, making all the decisions, "My way or else," telling you what you can and cannot wear, pressure to have sex, drink or take drugs, loses temper often, always blames you, prevents you from spending time with your friends and family, pushed, grabbed or touched you in a way that hurts, having to feel afraid).*

*According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 4 eighth and ninth grade students will be victims of nonsexual violent incident at the hands of a dating partner. The study goes on to report that one in twelve eighth and ninth grade students are victims of sexual violence that is perpetrated by a dating partner. Minimal experience with relationships, poor relationships with parents, and lack of a healthy support network are all reasons that make teenagers vulnerable to dating violence.*

*Dating violence affects teens from all walks of life; it happens to teenagers of both genders, all socioeconomic levels, all geographic regions, and all ethnic groups. The effects of a violent relationship can be devastating. The teen may suffer from low self-esteem, become involved with alcohol and drugs, as well as engage in risky sexual behaviors that may lead to sexually transmitted diseases and/or unplanned pregnancies. Many people often wonder what keeps a teenager in a violent relationship. One reason that a teenager might stay in abusive relationship is because they may confuse jealousy and possessiveness with love. Teen victims*

*often think that any attention is better than no attention at all. Teens need to understand that conflict in relationships is ok. Violence is never ok. Another reason teenagers may stay in a violent relationship is that the victim is afraid the abuser will hurt or kill them if they attempt to leave the relationship or seek help. A victim may attempt to seek help from a parent or a teacher who might not take the teenager seriously due to their young age. This can be devastating to a young person who is looking for support or guidance. Often times the abuser has told the victim that no one will believe him or her or be able to help.*

*Parent, teachers, and anyone who works around teenagers need to be aware of the signs of dating violence. Signs of abuse can include, but are not limited to: physical abuse (hitting, pushing, or kicking), sexual abuse (forced sexual acts or intercourse, refusing to wear or use contraception), emotional/verbal abuse (threatening violence, breaking things, put-downs). The most important thing to remember is the abuse is never the victim's fault. Teenage victims need the support of their friends, family, teachers, and community. If a teenager that you know is being abused there are several things that you can do to help. First, be supportive, listen, and believe his or her story. The next step is to make sure that the victim does not need any medical attention. Help the teen decide what is the best course of action for his or her individual situation. Your local domestic violence agency can help educate the victim about his or her options.*

Explain to students that dating can be a rewarding and fun experience. In order to get the most out of dating experiences, students need to use effective communication to convey expectations to their dating partners and should know their rights and responsibilities concerning dating.

- Place a transparency of Dating Principles (Appendix 1) on the overhead projector. Place the students in groups of four or five. Assign each group the task of reading each right and discussing examples of how this right would benefit a healthy teen relationship. The groups should choose the three “rights” that they thought were most important and share with the class.
- Once each group has reported, ask individual students to choose the “right” they feel the least comfortable with (the behavior they may have difficulty claiming as their right. For example some students may feel uncomfortable saying no to their dating partner). Once the students have identified a couple of rights that they feel uncomfortable with, have them complete an in-class writing activity. The students should answer the following questions:
  1. *Why do I feel uncomfortable with this right?*
  2. *What can I do to feel more comfortable with this right?*
  3. *Who in my life could assist me with this process?*
- Share answers in small groups.
- It is important that teenagers realize that there are some behaviors that are not normal in a healthy relationship. Explain to the class that this next activity will help them learn to identify behaviors that support a healthy relationship.
- Distribute the behaviors listed on the slips of paper to the students (created from Appendix 2, Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationship Behaviors). On the board write the word HEALTHY on the left hand side of the board and the word UNHEALTHY on the Right hand side of the board. Give the students a small piece of tape and have them decide where on the relationship continuum (that you have just created on the board) their slip of paper should be placed. Discuss each behavior and agree as a class whether the behavior is healthy, unhealthy or if it depends on the situation. (Answers for teacher: Healthy—laughing, friendship, intimacy, sharing, compromise; Unhealthy—control,

blaming, fear, yelling, hitting, pushing, crying; Depends on Situation—laughing (both people should be having fun), crying (sometime even healthy relationships have their hard times) There may be other answers if the students give a valid compelling argument.

### **Guided Practice:**

- Explain to the class that a contract is an agreement between two people. Safe, fun dates do not just happen—they require a lot of planning and effective communication. This activity will help the students think through some of the more difficult aspects of dating.
- Distribute a copy of the Dating Contract (Appendix 3) to each student. Ask them to read the contract. Ask if this is a form they would use with a dating partner. Are there any questions on the contract they feel uncomfortable discussing with a dating partner? Why or Why Not? Ask the students to add additional questions that might be important to them in future dating relationships.
- Pass out a copy of the Go Out, Have Fun, and Date (Appendix 4) to each student. Place the student in groups and have them create a safe healthy date for a teenager in your county. Once each group is finished, have the groups write their dates on newsprint and display around the school as suggestions for other students. Keep in mind the date must follow the guidelines suggested in the Go Out, Have Fun and Date. The date must also follow these rules:
  - Two to four hours in duration
  - Cannot spend more than 25 dollars
  - No sexual intercourse
  - No movies
  - Must avoid high risk activities and/or behaviors

### **Independent Practice:**

- Tell the students that they are going to create a want ad describing the kind of person and the type of healthy relationship that they want. The students can be as creative as they want. The want ad must include: their qualities, desired partner's qualities, hobbies, and interests. The students can use arts and craft supplies, the computer, and magazines to create their want ads. The goal of this activity is to be creative and utilize the skills and knowledge from this lesson. This project will be turned in at a later class to give the students adequate time to work on the project.

### **Closure:**

*Today we discussed healthy relationships. You are now able to describe healthy relationships, recognize behaviors that may be considered unhealthy, and describe principles necessary to formulate healthy relationships.*

# Dating Bill of Rights

Each dating partner has the right to:

- ❑ Be treated with respect and honesty
- ❑ Share common experiences
- ❑ Ask for what they want
- ❑ Give and receive expressions of affection
- ❑ Be accepted for who they are
- ❑ Clearly communicate their needs
- ❑ Feel safe with their date
- ❑ Say “NO” and not feel guilty
- ❑ Have fun
- ❑ Make decisions
- ❑ Express their own thoughts and feelings
- ❑ Never be forced to do anything
- ❑ Make mistakes and be forgiven
- ❑ Be supported in the good times and tough times
- ❑ Be treated fairly and equally



- Be allowed time with other friends and family

## Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationship Behaviors

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Laughing   | Crying     |
| Hitting    | Pushing    |
| Friendship | Yelling    |
| Intimacy   | Fear       |
| Blaming    | Sharing    |
| Control    | Compromise |





# Relationship Contract

## Dating

1. How do you decide where and what you do on a date?
2. Who should pay for the date?
3. Is there ever a time where it would be o.k. for your partner to push you around or hit you?
4. How much time should you spend together on evenings and weekends?

## Sexual Rights

1. Should either of you be able to say no to sexual contact?
2. Who is responsible for Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention and Pregnancy Prevention?

## Other Relationships

1. Are both of you free to be friends with other people? Are you free to be friends with members of the opposite gender?
2. How will you deal with jealousy?

## Priorities

1. What qualities are most important to you in a boyfriend/girlfriend?
2. In your opinion, what needs to be present in a relationship in order for it to be a good one?



## GO OUT, HAVE FUN, DATE, & BE SAFE!

### Beforehand:

- Think over your goals and values. Keep them in mind during the date. Know your boundaries clearly.
- Think about participating in a self-defense course.
- Arrange date plans. Go somewhere public or group date with friends.
- Make sure to have an alternative plan and a ride home in case something goes wrong.

### On the Date:

- Don't drink alcohol or use drugs.
- Remember your goals, values, and boundaries. Be able to state your boundaries, and make your date aware of your boundaries.
- Stay with your crowd. Don't put yourself in a vulnerable position alone, such as in a car or home with your date.
- Watch your body language and watch their body language. Communication can be non-verbal too, so make sure you are clearly saying what you want (and do not want).
- Be aware of the situation. If you start to feel uncomfortable, or something isn't right, do something about it: ***call someone to get you and make certain you are safe.***

