

RESEARCH
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Safe DATES

An Adolescent Dating Abuse Prevention Curriculum

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Scope and Sequence



What Is *Safe Dates*?

The *Safe Dates* program is a dating abuse prevention program consisting of five components:

- A nine-session dating abuse curriculum
- A play about dating abuse
- A poster contest
- Parent materials
- A teacher training outline

All the materials needed to implement the program are included in the *Safe Dates* binder.

What Are the Goals of *Safe Dates*?

The goals of this program are to:

- Raise students' awareness of what constitutes healthy and abusive dating relationships.
- Raise students' awareness of dating abuse and its causes and consequences.
- Equip students with the skills and resources to help themselves or friends in abusive dating relationships.
- Equip students with the skills to develop healthy dating relationships, including positive communication, anger management, and conflict resolution.

Who Is the Intended Audience?

Safe Dates can be used as a dating abuse prevention tool for both male and female middle and high school students. *Safe Dates* would fit well within a health education, family life skills, or general life skills curriculum.

Because dating violence is often tied to the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, you may want to consider using *Safe Dates* in conjunction with drug and alcohol prevention programs, as well as any other general violence prevention programs.

A school counselor could offer *Safe Dates* as part of a support group or counseling/education program or it could be used in after school, community youth enrichment (e.g., YMCA, Girl Scouts), and faith-based youth programs.

Safe Dates could also be used as an intervention tool at domestic abuse or crisis centers, in juvenile diversion programs, and with victim support groups.

Is *Safe Dates* a Research-Based Program?

Safe Dates is a research-based program with strong, long-term outcomes. It has been identified as a Model Program in the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) as well as many other federal- and foundation-funded publications.

Safe Dates was the subject of substantial formative research in fourteen North Carolina public schools with eighth and ninth grade students using a rigorous experimental design. The program was found to be effective in both preventing perpetration and in reducing perpetration among teens already using violence against their dates. Adolescents participating in the program, as compared with those who did not, also reported less acceptance of dating violence, stronger communication and anger management skills, less of a tendency to gender stereotype, and a greater awareness of community services for dating abuse.

Researchers studied the same group of students four years after implementation and found that students who participated in the *Safe Dates* program reported 56 percent to 92 percent less physical, serious physical, and sexual dating violence victimization and perpetration than teens who did not participate in *Safe Dates*. The program has been found to be equally effective for males and females and for whites and non-whites.

***Safe Dates* Main Components**

The following is a brief description of each component of the *Safe Dates* program.

Nine Session Curriculum

The *Safe Dates* curriculum is a nine-session program that targets attitudes and behaviors associated with dating abuse and violence. Each session is approximately fifty minutes in length. *Safe Dates* is designed to fit various schedule formats (e.g., daily or weekly programs). Reproducible student handouts are included at the end of each session.

If you do not have time to complete all nine sessions, the curriculum also has suggestions for a six-session or four-session program. It is important to realize, however, that the fidelity of the product and accompanying outcomes are best maintained by completing all nine sessions.

Session 1: Defining Caring Relationships

Through a bingo game and class discussions, students are introduced to the *Safe Dates* program and evaluate how they would like to be treated in dating relationships.

Session 2: Defining Dating Abuse

Through the discussion of scenarios and the review of statistics, students clearly define what dating abuse is.

Session 3: Why Do People Abuse?

Through large and small group discussions and the review of scenarios, students identify the causes and consequences of dating abuse.

Session 4: How to Help Friends

Through a decision-making exercise, a dramatic reading, and the introduction of the “Friend’s Wheel,” students learn why it is difficult to leave abusive relationships and how to help a friend if she or he is in an abusive relationship.

Session 5: Helping Friends

Through stories and role-playing, students practice effective skills for helping friends who are victims of abuse or confronting friends who are perpetrators of abuse.

Session 6: Overcoming Gender Stereotypes

Through a writing exercise, small-group discussions, and scenarios, students learn about gender stereotypes and how these stereotypes can affect dating relationships.

Session 7: Equal Power through Communication

Students learn the eight skills for effective communication and practice these skills in a variety of role-plays.

Session 8: How We Feel, How We Deal

Through the use of a feelings diary and a discussion of “hot buttons,” students learn effective ways to recognize and handle their anger, so it doesn’t lead to abusive behavior.

Session 9: Preventing Sexual Assault

Through taking a quiz and holding a caucus and a panel of their peers, students learn about the issue of sexual assault and how to prevent it from happening.

Dating Abuse Play

As part of your *Safe Dates* program, you may want to present this forty-five-minute play about dating abuse and violence, which was written by high school drama students. Before presenting the play, consider sharing local statistics on the prevalence of teen dating abuse. Following the performance, have the actors lead discussions, preferably in small groups, with the audience about the issues presented in the play.

Consider presenting this play as a school-wide assembly, as part of your school’s drama program, or at other school or community events. You do not need professional actors. Enlist the help of your school’s drama department or put on the play with your own students.

Poster Contest

Hosting a poster contest is a great way to reinforce the concepts learned in the curriculum. The poster contest is an optional activity that is best done after the completion of the curriculum. Posters on the theme of dating abuse prevention can be displayed in school hallways or other community buildings (e.g., libraries, city hall, and shopping malls). Students could also use their posters when giving presentations to various school or community groups.

Parent Materials

As in every strong prevention effort, it is important to get your students' parents or guardians involved in your *Safe Dates* program. Included with the curriculum is a parent education brochure that you can send to parents or keep on hand, in case you need to talk to a parent about this issue. There is also a parent letter that informs parents of the *Safe Dates* program. Consider mailing the letter and brochure together.

Teacher Training Outline

You may want to multiply your efforts by training others to use the *Safe Dates* curriculum. An outline for a three-hour training is provided in the curriculum. Consider hosting a training session for area schools or other local community youth organizations.

Why Is It Important to Teach about Dating Abuse?

Anyone can be a victim of aduse in dating relationships: girls and boys; whites, African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians; students born in rich neighborhoods and students born in poor neighborhoods; people that come from abusive homes and people who do not; people who have dated a lot and people who have just begun dating. Children as young as 12 years old can become involved in abusive dating relationships.

Dating abuse is a very real issue for many students:

The percentage of high school students found to have ever been victims of dating violence ranges from 10 percent to 38 percent.¹

Among students who are currently dating, as many as 59 percent have experienced physical violence, and 96 percent have experience psychological or emotional abuse.¹

- People who use violence with their dating partners as adults often began doing so during adolescence, with the first episode typically occurring by age fifteen.²
- Young women between the ages of fourteen and seventeen represent 38 percent of those victimized by date rape.³
- Rapes by acquaintances account for 60 percent of all rapes reported to rape crisis centers.⁴
- Both girls and boys are victims and perpetrators of abuse.
- Violence in relationships almost always reoccurs and gets more severe over time.

Footnotes:

¹ Halpern, Carolyn Tucker, Selene G. Oslak, Mary L. Young, Sandra L. Martin, and Lawrence L. Kupper. Partner Violence Among Adolescents in Opposite-Sex Romantic Relationships: Findings From the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *American Journal of Public Health*. 91, No. 10 (October 2001).

² Henton, J., R. Cate, J. Koval, S. Lloyd, S. Christopher. "Romance and Violence in Dating Relationships". *Fam Iss* 4, No. 3 (1983): 467-82.

³ Warshaw, R. *I Never Called It Rape: The MS. Report on Recognizing, Fighting and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

⁴ Sousa, Carol. "The Dating Violence Intervention Project". In *Dating Violence: Young Women In Danger*. Barrie Levy, editor. Englewood, NJ: Seal Press, 1998.

Curriculum Scope & Sequence

At the end of each session, students will be able to:	
Session 1: Defining Caring Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the qualities that are most important to them in a dating relationship. • Identify actions that are caring and supportive. • Describe how they want to be treated by a dating partner. • Describe how they want to treat a dating partner. • Firmly believe they can and should choose how they will be treated in a dating relationship. • Firmly believe they can and should choose how they will treat a dating partner.
Session 2: Defining Dating Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify harmful dating behaviors. • Define physically and emotionally abusive behaviors. • Identify physical and emotional abuse in complex interactions between a girlfriend and a boyfriend. • Be more likely to identify abusive behaviors as abusive. • Have an increased perception of their susceptibility to dating abuse. • Be more likely to reject abuse as normal in dating relationships.
Session 3: Why Do People Abuse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the controlling and manipulative functions of dating abuse. • Identify abusive behaviors as abusive. • Choose not to believe common misperceptions of why dating abuse happens. • Choose to believe that dating abuse is a serious matter. • Choose to believe that abuse is not the victim’s fault. • Describe the serious short- and long-term consequences of abusive relationships. • Identify the warning signs that a person is a victim or a perpetrator of abuse.
Session 4: How to Help Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the complexity of the decision to leave an abusive relationship and the many different opinions that exist concerning when one should leave. • Identify the difficulty and fear that a friend in an abusive relationship may have in reaching out for help. • Describe the variety of ways to support a friend who is a victim of dating abuse. • Describe the resources for teenagers in violent dating relationships. • Seek help if they are victims or perpetrators of abuse in a dating relationship.
Session 5: Helping Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify “red flags” that indicate that their friend might be a perpetrator or a victim of dating abuse. • Feel more comfortable with the task of confronting a friend who is abusive in a dating relationship. • Describe how to support a friend who is in an abusive relationship.

Curriculum Scope & Sequence

At the end of each session, students will be able to:	
Session 6: Overcoming Gender Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that people hold images of dating relationships and that they have specific images themselves. • Describe how the images people hold influence their interactions in a dating relationship. • Identify the harmful consequences of gender stereotyping. • Explain the role that gender stereotyping plays in dating relationships.
Session 7: Equal Power through Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe eight communication skills for resolving conflict. • Demonstrate the use of the eight <i>Safe Dates</i> communication skills. • Describe some non-violent responses when a boyfriend or girlfriend does not communicate in a way that is fair and equal.
Session 8: How We Feel, How We Deal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a greater variety of ways of expressing feelings or emotions. • Choose to believe it is important to acknowledge and communicate their specific feelings. • Identify situations that trigger their anger. • Identify physiological and psychological cues that they are angry. • Identify a variety of non-violent ways to respond to anger. • Firmly believe there is a choice in how to respond to anger. • Have an increased frequency of using non-violent responses to anger.
Session 9: Preventing Sexual Assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be less likely to blame the victim for sexual assault. • Have an increased acceptance of postscriptive rape norms and a decreased acceptance of prescriptive rape norms. • Be more likely to interpret “NO” cues as “NO” cues. • Know how to protect themselves in a potential rape situation. • State their sexual boundaries clearly to their dating partner. • Describe dating tips to decrease their chances of being a victim or a perpetrator of sexual assault.

Meeting National Academic Standards* with *Safe Dates*

Using *Safe Dates* will help you meet the following national academic standards:

Health Education Standards: (6th-8th grade)

- Knows how to locate and use community health information, products, and services that provide valid health information.
- Knows how cultural beliefs within a community influence the health of its members.
- Understands how peer relationships affect health.
- Knows appropriate ways to build and maintain positive relationships with peers, parents, and other adults (e.g., interpersonal communication).
- Understands the difference between safe and risky or harmful behaviors in relationships.
- Knows techniques for seeking help and support through appropriate resources.
- Knows potential signs of self- and other-directed violence.
- Knows the various possible causes of conflict among youth in schools and communities, and strategies to manage conflict.
- Knows how refusal and negotiation skills can be used to enhance health.

Health Education Standards: (9th-12th grade)

- Knows situations that require professional health services.
- Understands the responsibilities inherent in dating relationships, marriage, and parenthood.
- Knows skills used to communicate effectively with family, friends, and others, and the effects of open and honest communication.
- Understands the role of denial as a negative influence on mental and emotional health, and ways to overcome denial and seek assistance when needed.
- Knows strategies for solving interpersonal conflicts without harming self or others.
- Knows how refusal, negotiation, and collaboration skills can be used to avoid potentially harmful situations.
- Understands the short- and long-term consequences of safe, risky, and harmful behaviors.
- Knows how the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs often plays a role in dangerous behavior and can have adverse consequences on the community (e.g., domestic violence, date rape).

Life Skills:

Thinking and Reasoning: (6th – 8th grade)

- Identifies alternative courses of action and predicts likely consequences of each.
- Selects the most appropriate strategy or alternative for solving a problem.
- Examines different alternatives for resolving local problems and compares the possible consequences of each alternative.
- Identifies situations in the community and in one's personal life in which a decision is required.
- When appropriate, takes action to implement the decision.

Thinking and Reasoning: (9th – 12th grade)

- Applies trouble-shooting strategies to complex real-world situations.

Working with Others: (6th – 12th grade)

- Demonstrates respect for others in the group.
- Engages in active listening.
- Communicates ideas in a manner that does not irritate others.
- Determines the causes of conflicts.
- Identifies an explicit strategy to deal with conflict.
- Displays empathy with others.
- Communicates in a clear manner during conversations.

* Standards are taken from Kendall, John S. and Robert J. Marzano, *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education (3rd Edition)*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL), 2000.