Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 7 and 8

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Laptop connected to the internet
- LCD projector and screen
- White board and markers
- Flipchart paper and markers (if pre-writing the chart is described on page 4)
- Homework: "Making Sexual Assault Stop" - one per student
- Student Reference Sheet – Washington State Laws Related to Consent
- Pencils in case students do not have their own
- Speakers to project audio from videos

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Make sure you have internet access in your classroom and that you have had these links unblocked for your use:
- - What is Sexual Assault?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8gslq85Xsc
- - The Signs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=He1pu4VwKdM
- Right before class, open the videos and make sure they are working; keep the links open and minimized so they are ready when you need them.
- Be sure to tell the school counselor that you will be addressing this topic in class and invite them to sit in in case a student discloses any current or past abuse or is triggered by what is discussed. If the counselor is not available, you may wish to follow up with them after the class as needed to let them know whether you observed anything in any of the students that would make you feel concerned and merit follow-up.
- If the school counselor is not available, it would still be useful to have another adult in the classroom in case a student needs to step out of the class or is otherwise particularly distressed by the material.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Name at least two different types of sexual assault. [Knowledge]
2. List at least one example of each of the following: mutual consent, unfair manipulation, threats and aggression. [Knowledge]
3. Describe at least two possible impacts of a sexual assault or abusive relationship on the person who was assaulted. [Knowledge]
4. Demonstrate an understanding of how to report a sexual assault or abusive relationship. [Knowledge, Skill]

Note to the Teacher: *Another option for addressing this topic that can be very powerful is to have survivors of relationship abuse or sexual assault come to speak with your class. Regardless of whether you choose to do that or conduct the lesson as written, be sure to coordinate with your school counselor, as discussing the topics in this lesson can be overwhelming or triggering for some students who may have experienced assault. If you do choose to present a panel, be sure to vet your panelists thoroughly. Try to invite survivors of different genders to break stereotypes that only men abuse and only women are abused.*

In addition, regardless of whether you have a panel or use this lesson, it is a good idea to let students know during the previous class that you will be addressing this topic the next time you meet with them. This gives those who may be survivors of abuse or trauma who may wish to miss this class session to avoid being triggered and re-traumatized the opportunity to take care of themselves.

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him", using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to "someone with a vulva" vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Explain to the students that you are going to be talking about a particularly intense topic today – sexual abuse and assault. If you have already created groundrules for your classroom, be sure to highlight them before starting the lesson. If you don't have any already created, explain to the students that you are going to ask them to be particularly sensitive and respectful during this class session. *(2 minutes)*

STEP 2: Say, "Talking about sexual abuse and assault and harassment can sometimes be really clear and straight forward. For example, you may know already that rape and sexual assault are when someone is forced to do something sexual they don't want to do. Let's take a quick look at some basic information about sexual assault."

Play the Amaze video, "What is Sexual Assault" from https://amaze.org/video/personal-safety-sexual-assault/.

Ask the students, "What facts stood out to you about this clip?" Probe for the following:

- Why does Barb, the main character, try to quiet Sarah when she says "He might be sexually assaulting you." out loud?
- What is the definition of sexual assault you remember being stated in the video? (Answer: When someone does something sexual to another person without getting their permission first.)

- What are some examples of things that are considered sexual assault?
  (Answer: Touching someone's genitals, breasts or butt, inserting anything into any other body parts, showing them something sexual without their explicit consent, etc.)

- What is explicit consent?
  (Answer: A clear, voluntary agreement to do something sexual)

- What are the situations in which it's not possible for someone to give explicit consent?
  (Answer: A shrug, being silent, feeling pressured or uncomfortable, being drunk or high)

- Why is sexual assault never the fault of the victim?
  (Answer: Sexual assault is about power, not sex and the victim – no matter who they are, what they are wearing, what they look like, how much they have been drinking/doing drugs – never did anything to consent to the assault, no matter what.)

- What should someone do if they are sexually assaulted?
  (Answer: Get to a hospital and tell a trusted adult like a parent/caregiver, school counselor, etc.)

- Why is it normal to feel uncomfortable or afraid to talk about sexual assault?
  (Answer: It can be a very upsetting topic, many victims feel like it was their fault, people might have been threatened or pressured to not tell what happened, victims can worry they or their loved ones will get in trouble if they report, etc.)

Share the following information not covered in the video:

- That sexual abuse and assault happens very often in the US, approximately 15-25% of people will experience this in their lifetime
- That it happens so often to people when they're really young
- People of all ages, body types and appearances are raped or sexually assaulted
- That most people know the person who assaulted them
- That it happens to boys and men, too
- That it happens to people of all races and ethnicities and other backgrounds
- Rape and sexual assault are about power and control, not about sex

Review the laws about rape and sexual assault in Washington state:

- In Washington state, rape is defined as any time a person has oral, anal, or vaginal sexual intercourse without consent. This could be by force, with or without a weapon, or when a person has not given their consent to sexual behavior.[1]

[1] https://www.rainn.org/laws-your-state-washington

- In Washington state, it is also illegal for people to force someone to engage in sexual touch.
- The age of consenting to sex is 16, and sex is not legal if there is a pre-determined age gap between someone under 16 and over 16.
- When the younger person is under the age of 12, sexual intercourse or touching by an older person is illegal, and is considered child molestation. There are some exceptions if the other person is very close in age to the person under 12.[2]

Share with the students that boys and men are also raped but report it much less than girls and women. Ask students, "Why do you think it may feel more difficult for boys and men to report sexual assault?"

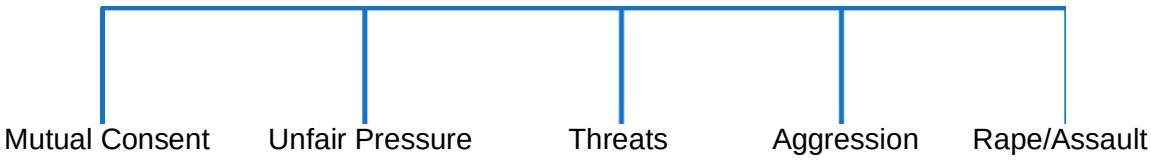
Probe for:

- Because if a heterosexual guy is assaulted by another guy, he may be worried that other people think he is or "will become" gay because of what happened (be sure to tell them this is not the case)
- If the guy who was assaulted actually is gay, he may feel unsafe reporting it to someone else because he might be worried they'll discriminate against or further victimize him (or simply not care).

- If the rapist is female, he may feel like no one will believe him – or won't understand why he could not overpower her or otherwise get away.
  (15 minutes)

STEP 3: Say, "I mentioned before that when someone forces someone to do something they don't want to do, it's pretty clear cut that it's sexual assault. But what happens when it's unclear? We're going to do an activity now where we look at what's okay and not okay when it comes to sexual touch and behaviors – how we can be clear about what we do and don't want to do – and how we can be sure to recognize whether the other person is really giving their consent to – meaning, actively saying "yes" and that you are sure they want to be kissed or touched by you." *(2 minutes)*

STEP 4: Either have the following written on the board with the video screen covering it, or have it pre-written on newsprint and post it at this point:



[2] This resource has been adapted from Seattle King County's "Sexual Consent: Breaking Down Appropriate Age" resource

Say, “I’m going to start at the far right, because we just talked about this, and as I said, it’s the most obvious and easily recognizable example of sexual touch that is never okay, and illegal.

Rape/Sexual Assault is when someone forces another person to perform a sex act, such as vaginal, oral or anal sex. This includes when someone uses an object to – and in some states, even a finger.

Aggression is more random touching – like someone walks by someone and pinches them or touches a sexual body part – where the act is over before the person could have even given their consent. This is a type of assault, even if it may have been intended as a joke or as teasing.

Threats refers to when someone tells the other person that if they don’t do something sexual with them, there will be consequences that are not physical – for example:

- ‘If you don’t have sex with me, I’ll go out and find someone who will.’
- ‘If you don’t have sex with me, I’ll just tell people you did anyway.’
- ‘If you don’t do this, I’ll forward those sexy pictures you texted me to everyone you know.’

Unfair Pressure is when someone uses what they know is important to the other person to get that person to do what they want. It’s not restricted to sexuality-related things, but we’re going to keep focused on that. For example:

- When someone says, ‘I love you’ to someone even if they don’t, because they think saying that will get that person to do something sexual with them.
- When someone keeps pressuring the other person, knowing that that person will eventually give in just to make the pressure stop.

Mutual Consent:
Mutual consent is essential in any relationship. It’s when both people actively say what they want, and both people agree to any behavior that they are going to do together. When we are talking about doing something sexual in nature, you need to ask your partner if they want to do it. Do they want what you want? Never assume that just because someone doesn’t verbally say “no” it means that they are good with it, always ask. And if you can tell your partner doesn’t feel right about doing something, back off and consider something else.”

Likewise, if you don’t feel right about doing something, speak up and say it.”

Say, “That was a lot to go through! What’s your reaction to seeing all these? Do you have any questions?” *(14 minutes)*

STEP 5: After answering any questions or facilitating comments from the class, say, “Remember the part in the last video when it said that in most cases sexual assaults are committed by someone who knows the person they assault? This can, unfortunately, also be a family member. When it’s committed by a family member it’s called ‘incest.’ And sometimes, it can be a partner or spouse who is abusive, whether physically or not. For the next part of class, we’re going to take a look at some of the abuse that can happen in those types of relationships.”

Show the video clip, "The Signs."

Process by asking the following questions:

- "How do you think Amanda is feeling when Nick first asked her out?"
- "What was the first sign that there was something off about the relationship?"
- "How did Nick respond after their first argument? Do you think this was a healthy way to respond or not?"
- "Where would you put the different interactions between them on the chart?" Write these up on the board/newsprint.
- "When the relationship started moving from Mutual Consent to the right, what impact(s) did it have on Amanda? What about on her best friend, Ashley?"
  (14 minutes)

STEP 6: Say, "We often hear the term 'dating or domestic violence,' when abusive relationships may not be physically abusive at all. The point here – and the theme that runs throughout these videos and all the information we have been discussing during this class -- is 'power and control.' And while you may hear 'power and control' and think that's something you'd want -- it's not something that should be a part of a healthy relationship. So even if you're the one doing the manipulating and controlling, your relationship isn't healthy. And keep in mind – some of the behaviors we've been talking about are also illegal.

Someone who is being abused or assaulted should speak up if they can so that others can help make the abuse stop and so that it won't happen to someone else."

Say, "The first step in making it stop is to know how. So the homework for this class will be to visit at least one of the websites on the sheet I'm about to hand out to you and answer some questions I've asked." As you distribute the homework assignments, say, "This is a very intense topic we've discussed. The school counselor knows we were going to talk about this today. So if you have more questions and you want to talk about this more, you can speak with the school counselor – or of course, you can always come to me to talk."
(3 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

This lesson is very affective and discussion-based; as such, the teacher will need to assess understanding of the material during the discussions as part of student participation. It is also important to keep in mind that if students have had any personal experience with abuse or assault, they may participate less – which does not necessarily mean they are not understanding the material. The homework assignment will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of some of the class content, while also achieving the fifth learning objective.

HOMEWORK:

Students will be given a sheet listing several websites that are age-appropriate for them that lists additional facts, as well as information about how to report abuse or an assault, and asked to visit at least one site and respond to several questions about it.

Note to the Teacher: *Be sure to return these homework sheets to the students after you've reviewed them so they will have the website information to keep moving forward.*

Note: Consent chart adapted from an activity in the curriculum "Sexual Violence in Teenage Lives: A Prevention Curriculum." Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, 1994.

Taking Action:
Make Sexual Assault and Abuse STOP

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please choose one of the following websites and respond to the questions listed below about that site:

- Break the Cycle: http://www.breakthecycle.org/
- Love is Respect: http://www.loveisrespect.org/
- Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): https://rainn.org/

Which site did you visit? _____

1. Name two facts about sexual abuse or assault from your site that you didn't know already:

   a. _____

   b. _____

2. What is this site's phone hotline or text line for talking with someone about an assault or abuse?

   _____

3. If you knew someone who had been assaulted or abused, would you refer them to this site? Why or why not?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Washington Laws Related to Sexual Consent

Age of Consent:
The age of consent to sexual activity in Washington is 16 years old.

The "Age of Consent" is how old someone must be to legally consent to sex with an adult – a person who is 18 years old or older.

Even if a person is 16, they still can't consent to sex with a person who is their teacher, boss, or has authority over them due to the imbalance of power in the relationship.

Sex is not legal if:

- The younger person is under 12, and the older person is more than 24 months older (2 years)
- The younger person is 12 or 13 and the older person is more than 36 months older (3 years)
- The younger person is 14 or 15 and the older person is more than 48 months (4 years) older.

Consent to Sexual Healthcare :

- Youth may have access to the following reproductive health care services without the permission of a parent or guardian:
- Youth who are 14 years old and older are able to gest testing and treatment HIV and other STIs
- Youth of any age may get access to birth control
- Youth who are of any age may receive an abortion and access to abortion related services, or prenatal care during pregnancy.[3]

Sexual Assault:
In Washington state, rape is defined as any time a person has oral, anal, or vaginal sexual intercourse without consent. This could be by force, with or without a weapon, or when a person has not given their consent to sexual behavior.[4]

- It is illegal for people to force someone to engage in sexual touch.
- The age of consenting to sex is 16, and sex is not legal if there is a pre-determined age gap between someone under 16 and over 16.
- When the younger person is under the age of 12, sexual intercourse or touching by an older person is illegal, and is considered child molestation. There are some exceptions if the other person is very close in age to the person under 12.

Sexting:
In Washington, when a person under 18 send a sexually explicit image of another person under 18, it is considered a crime. If the person in the image is over 13, there are less strict penalties, such as paying a fine, meeting with a counselor, or do community service. If the person in the photo is under 13, there are very strict penalties.

[3] This resource has been adapted from Seattle King County's "Sexual Consent: Breaking Down Appropriate Age" resource
[4] https://www.rainn.org/laws-your-state-washington