LESSON 2

Dating Relationships

Ages 12–15

Lesson 2. Dating Relationships

Ages

12–15

Learning Objectives

Cadets and JCRs will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of healthy dating relationships (Activities 1, 2, and 3).
- Recognize their boundaries in a relationship (Activity 2).
- Develop a personal safety plan (Activities 1, 2, and 3).

Facilitators have three activities from which to choose in the body of this lesson. Each activity ranges from 15–20 minutes in length. Time required for the introduction is 3–5 minutes, and time required for the conclusion is 5–10 minutes.

Learning Tools and Materials

If audiovisual equipment is not available, handouts could be produced from the slides, or the information could be displayed on a flip chart or white board.

Slide deck:

- Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship
- Look, Listen, Link, Live©
- Kids Help Phone
- Community Resources

Handouts:

- Red Light, Green Light Scenarios
- (Optional) Red, yellow, and green paper (for use if the room is not conducive to participants moving around during Activity 2: Red Light, Green Light)
- Relationship Quiz Cards
- Relationship Quiz Cards: Answer Key
- Taylor's Story
- Support Circles
- Safety Plan

Lesson Preparation

Introduction

- Nil.

Activity 1. Healthy Dating Relationships

- Set up audiovisual equipment and cue slides (or alternative way to display information):
  - Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship.
- Prepare and post five pieces of flip chart paper around the room, each displaying one of the statements from Activity 1, Paragraph 3.
- Gather one felt marker for each participant.

Activity 2. Red Light, Green Light

- Draw a traffic light on three separate pieces of paper, and colour in only the red light on one, only the yellow light on the next, and only the green light on the last one. Post each traffic light in a different area of the classroom. (Participants will be instructed to move to the light they choose for a series of scenarios given during the activity.)
- If the room is not conducive to participants moving around, you may:
  - hold up each traffic light sheet and have participants raise their hands to represent their response; or
  - gather three sheets of construction paper (red, yellow, and green) for each participant and have them hold up the colour they choose for each scenario.

Activity 3. What Do You Know About Dating Relationships? Quiz

- Prepare or gather one set of Relationship Quiz Cards.
- Put the Relationship Quiz Cards into a bowl or other container.
- Print a copy of the Relationship Quiz Cards: Answer Key for yourself.

Conclusion

- Set up audiovisual equipment and cue slides (or alternative way to display information):
  - Look, Listen, Link, Live©;
  - Kids Help Phone; and
  - Community Resources.
- Fill in the Community Resources presentation slide with local agency numbers and helplines.
- Print required number of copies of handouts:
  - Taylor's Story;
  - Support Circles; and
  - Safety Plan.

Introduction

Estimated Time

3–5 minutes

Review the following safety guidelines at the start of the lesson:

- Participate as you feel comfortable.
- Maintain confidentiality when discussing someone else's experiences.
- Listen when others are speaking.
- If you are uncomfortable with the topic or discussion, you have permission to leave the room for a break. An adult will check up on you.

This lesson covers youth dating relationships. Some of you may be dating, and some of you may not be dating. This information is important for everyone, and you can apply it to your friendships and dating relationships. In this lesson, we will look at what makes a dating relationship healthy and explore personal boundaries in dating relationships.

Read the following scenario out loud to the participants to facilitate a quick discussion on the topic.

Taylor and Breckin have been seeing each other for a few weeks. Breckin is older and is the star hockey player in the community. Taylor and Breckin are alone one night, and Breckin keeps hugging and kissing Taylor. She is uncomfortable and keeps moving away. Finally, she tells him to stop. She says, "We need to go a bit slower." Breckin gets upset and says, "You better do what I want if you want to keep seeing me. There are lots of other girls who would be happy to be in your place."

You keep trying to get a hold of Taylor because she has not been at school, and she is ignoring your texts. You run into Breckin. When you ask him about Taylor, he tells you not to believe anything she says. You are worried, so you show up at her house. She is acting strangely, and you notice cut marks on her arms.

Is the relationship between Breckin and Taylor a healthy relationship? Why or why not?

Answer:

No. Taylor is setting a boundary about how far she is willing to go in the relationship with respect to physical affection, and Breckin is not respecting that boundary. Breckin is trying to pressure Taylor into doing something that she is not comfortable doing.

We will be doing an activity that will help you understand key aspects of a healthy dating relationship.

Activity 1
Healthy Dating Relationships

Estimated Time

15–20 minutes

1. There are all kinds of dating relationships. They can be serious or casual, short term or long term. They can include physical affection, like hugging or hand holding, or they can involve kissing or other sexual activity. Dating relationships can happen in person, long distance, or online.

2. Explain that you have posted a series of statements about dating relationships on five flip chart papers around the room.

3. Read out the statements on the pieces of flip chart paper:

   - I have friends who are in healthy dating relationships.
   - I know someone who has experienced an unhealthy dating relationship.
   - I am not sure what a healthy dating relationship looks like.
   - It is hard to leave an unhealthy dating relationship.
   - I am unsure how to help a friend who is in an unhealthy dating relationship.

4. Distribute a felt marker to each participant. Have the participants go around the room and put a check mark on the flip chart if they agree with the statement or if the statement applies to them. Have them mark an X if they disagree with the statement or if the statement does not apply to them. Have them all sit back down when they have completed the activity.

5. Now that you have all marked your responses to each statement, you will have a few minutes to go around the room again. This time, look at the pattern of responses on each piece of flip chart paper.

   Have them all sit back down when they have completed the activity. Ask the participants the following questions:

   a. Did you notice any patterns in the responses?
   b. What can you learn from this activity?

   Possible answers could include:
   - Everyone in the room has different experiences and knowledge about dating relationships.
   - Many of us have known someone in an unhealthy relationship and are unsure of how to help them.

6. Divide the participants into pairs. Have them brainstorm what makes a dating relationship healthy. Have random groups share some of their ideas.

Possible answers could include:

- You like each other.
- You have things in common.
- You have fun together.
- You support each other.
- There is no violence in the relationship.
- Your partner respects your boundaries.
- You can trust your partner with information that you share.
- You feel comfortable in being your true, genuine self.

7. Display the Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship content, using the presentation slide or the alternative method you have prepared. Use the following speaking notes to review each characteristic.

   "Respect" means acting in a way that shows you care about someone's feelings and well-being. When we are in an environment that is respectful, we feel safe and are more likely to be our true, genuine selves.

   Having "trust" involves having confidence in someone and knowing that they will be there for you.

   "Healthy communication" means each person in a relationship can express their needs, expectations, and boundaries.

   "Conflict resolution" is being able to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement in a fair, open, and respectful way.

   "Independence" means making choices and decisions outside of a relationship, such as doing an activity even if your friends are not interested in it.

   A healthy relationship should be "fun." You enjoy time together and look forward to hanging out with that person.

   Being "supportive" is part of a healthy relationship. Your friends should be able to ask you for help when they need it. You should be able to count on your friends for help when you need it.

   In friendships based on "equality", everyone feels that they have the power to make decisions and freely state their opinions; are safe to share their feelings; and are respected. People feel they can be their genuine, authentic selves.

   In a healthy relationship, you should feel comfortable; "safe"; and not threatened by violence, bullying, or harassment.

   "Empathy" is the ability to understand and share how someone else is feeling by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation.

   "Respecting personal boundaries" involves listening to others and respecting their limits and their expectations for how they want to be treated in a relationship.

8. Divide the participants into different pairs. Have them brainstorm a list of warning signs of an unhealthy dating relationship. Have random groups share a few of their responses.

9. Use the following speaking notes to supplement the discussion with any points that may have been missed.

   Warning signs of an unhealthy dating relationship may include someone:

   a. trying to control their partner by telling them what to do, what to wear, and with whom they can hang out;
   b. constantly checking up on their partner and wanting to know where they are every minute;
   c. using violence to hit or push their partner or to destroy their partner's belongings;
   d. name-calling, putting their partner down, and making fun of things that are important to their partner;
   e. sulking, getting angry, or using violence if they do not get their own way;
   f. making their partner feel scared of what they will do next or like they are "walking on eggshells";
   g. getting jealous and constantly accusing their partner of cheating on them, without any evidence or cause;
   h. pressuring their partner to do things they do not want to do, including drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or engaging in sexual activities; and
   i. threatening to harm themselves if their partner breaks up with them.

10. How do you think we can stop or prevent violence in our dating relationships by learning about healthy and unhealthy relationships?

    Allow the participants time to answer.

    Possible answers could include:

    - If we know what a healthy relationship is and what it looks like, we are more likely to choose relationships with people who treat themselves and others in healthy, respectful ways.
    - Learning about unhealthy relationships can help us recognize warning signs and then get help.
    - With information, we can help a friend who may be in an unhealthy relationship.

Activity 2
Red Light, Green Light

Estimated Time

15–20 minutes

1. “Boundaries” are an important part of healthy relationships. In the scenario, you saw that Breckin did not respect or listen to Taylor’s boundaries. Discussing boundaries with your dating partner is very important so that you are both aware of each other’s comfort levels. It is your responsibility to respect your partner’s boundaries.
2. Now we are going to talk about “personal boundaries”—the physical, emotional, and sexual limits that you create for yourself.
3. Draw a traffic light on three separate pieces of paper, and colour in only the red light on one, only the yellow light on the next, and only the green light on the last one. Post each traffic light in a different area of the classroom.
4. Explain to the participants that you will read out a series of relationship scenarios, and that they are to use the stoplight metaphor to determine their personal boundaries. They will decide whether they would:
    a. stop (i.e., end the relationship and / or seek help);
    b. proceed with caution (i.e., identify and communicate their personal boundaries); or
    c. go (i.e., continue, or move forward with, the relationship).

It is important to emphasize that this activity is not an opportunity to judge the decisions of others. Rather, it is a chance to think critically about personal boundaries, and it is an opportunity to deepen our respect for the boundaries of others.

5. After reading out a Red Light, Green Light scenario, have the participants move to the traffic light they feel is appropriate. Encourage them to make their own decisions: it is important that they can communicate the reasons behind their choices.

If the room is not conducive to participants moving around, you may:
- hold up each traffic light sheet and have participants raise their hands to represent their response; or
- give each participant three sheets of construction paper (red, yellow, and green) and have them hold up the colour they choose for each scenario.

6. Ask for volunteers to share the reasons why they chose to stop, proceed with caution, or go.
7. Repeat this process as time permits.

8. Ask the participants the following discussion questions:

   a. How did you find answering these questions: was it easy, difficult, or frustrating? Why?
   b. Do you think personal boundaries can change over time? Why or why not?
   c. How can we work together to make sure we are communicating and respecting each other's personal boundaries within our relationships?

Red Light, Green Light Scenarios

What if your friend or boyfriend / girlfriend / partner…

1. tells you what clothes to wear?
2. gives you the silent treatment when they are mad?
3. criticizes you, but tells you that they are just trying to help?
4. attends your events and cheers you on?
5. takes it out on you when they are in a bad mood?
6. tries to pressure you into doing things that you do not want to do?
7. makes comments about your appearance on social media?
8. wants you to quit an activity, even though you love it (such as the cadet / JCR program)?
9. tells you that you are great just the way you are?
10. reacts in a physical way when they are angry—maybe throwing or breaking things?
11. constantly checks in with you?
12. keeps their personal feelings to themselves?
13. sometimes scares you or makes you feel nervous? or
14. remembers things that are important to you?

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Activity 3
What Do You Know About Dating Relationships? Quiz

Estimated Time

15–20 minutes

1. We are going to do a “true or false” quiz to explore some of your beliefs and perceptions about dating relationships.
2. Divide the participants into two groups. Have them stand facing each other, like this:

GROUP 1	GROUP 2
A	E
B	F
C	G
D	H

3. Have one participant select a Relationship Quiz Card from the container and read it. Inform the participants that they have one minute to discuss and decide with the person across from them whether the statement is true or false.
4. Once the time is up, have pairs volunteer to share their answers. After each question, use the Relationship Quiz Cards: Answer Key to provide the correct answer and to share additional information.
5. For the next round, have everyone in Group 2 shift one over spot so they are facing a different person in Group 1, like this:

GROUP 1	GROUP 2
A	H
B	E
C	F
D	G

6. Continue the same procedure until all the cards have been discussed. Have everyone return to their seats.
7. Ask the participants the following discussion questions:

   a. Did you learn anything interesting or surprising?
   b. Healthy relationships do not happen by themselves. They require continuous effort and work. Can you think of ways to improve the quality of your relationships?

Relationship Quiz Cards

Can we talk? Being able to communicate and share feelings is an important part of a healthy relationship. True or False?
Small post—big effect! Technology and social media can have a negative impact on our relationships. True or False?
Relax! Dating violence is a college or university problem. Only a small percentage of high school students experience violence in their dating relationships. True or False?
Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Name-calling and insults are not a big deal. True or False?
Couples who are in love never fight! Conflict in a relationship is unhealthy. True or False?
Who are you going to call? Most youth will turn to adults for help when they are in trouble. True or False?
Jealousy can be used to control someone. Jealousy is not a sign of love. True or False?

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Relationship Quiz Cards: Answer Key

Can we talk? Being able to communicate and share feelings is an important part of a healthy relationship. True or False?

TRUE: Good communication is an important part of a healthy relationship. Each person in the relationship needs to be able to express themselves. Learning to explain oneself and to communicate needs, expectations, and boundaries are key communication skills.

Small post—big effects! Technology and social media can have a negative impact on our relationships. True or False?

TRUE: At times, using texts or social media can be a fast and easy way to communicate. However, without face-to-face contact, it can be hard to understand what another person is really saying or feeling. Messages that you post—whether they are comments or photos—can be hurtful and difficult or impossible to remove. The important thing to remember is: “Think before you post.” When you need to talk to a friend or dating partner about something important, think about the best way to do this. Sometimes it is best to pick up the phone or to take the time to talk to that person face-to-face.

Relax! Dating violence is a college or university problem. Only a small percentage of high school students experience violence in their dating relationships. True or False?

FALSE: Violence in dating relationships among youth is much more common than most people think. Approximately 33% of youth have experienced physical violence with a dating partner. Over 60% of youth have experienced emotional violence in their dating relationships.

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Name-calling and insults are not a big deal. True or False?

FALSE: Emotional violence can impact our self-esteem and affect our confidence. It does not matter if the name-calling or insults come from a parent, sibling, dating partner, or friend—always remember: words can hurt.

Couples who are in love never fight! Conflict in a relationship is unhealthy. True or False?

FALSE: Most close relationships involve some conflict or disagreement. Disagreeing with someone or having your own opinion is not a bad thing; it is how you communicate and work to solve the problem that makes a relationship healthy or unhealthy.

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Relationship Quiz Cards: Answer Key

Who are you going to call? Most youth will turn to adults for help when they are in trouble. True or False?

FALSE: For a variety of reasons, youth may not turn to adults for help. If they are experiencing violence in a relationship, youth often choose to confide in or seek advice from friends, before they will tell an adult.

To support a friend who is experiencing violence in a relationship, you should know how to listen, be supportive, and link the person to further help.

Jealousy can be used to control someone. Jealousy is not a sign of love. True or False?

TRUE: While we all feel jealous every now and then, jealousy is not a way to show someone that you love them or care about them. Jealousy can be a warning sign of an unhealthy relationship. Rather than showing someone that you love them, jealousy can be about “controlling” a partner’s behaviours. If someone uses jealousy to stop you from talking to other people and seeing friends, this is not about love: it is about control. Setting personal boundaries and communicating openly with your partner can help reduce the harmful effects of jealousy.

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Conclusion

Estimated Time

5–10 minutes

Safety Planning

Distribute a copy of the Support Circles or Safety Plan handout to any participants who did not fill one out prior to the lesson. Have them fill in the required sections.

If the participants filled out the Support Circles or Safety Plan handout already, ask them to revisit the section in which they recorded safe people to talk to. Are these the same people they would talk to about their relationships? Allow them time to record any changes.

Intervention: How to Help

Look, Listen, Link, Live©: How to Help a Friend

1. We know that youth will reach out to their peers for help before they will talk to an adult. We want to give you information so you can support a friend or peer if they come to you for help with relationship problems.

2. Display the Look, Listen, Link, Live© content, using the presentation slides or the alternative method you have prepared.

   This is a four-step model that we use to help a friend. Let us consider how we can help Taylor from our scenario. We are going to review the scenario and help Taylor using the Look, Listen, Link, Live© model.

   Read the scenario out loud.

> You may distribute copies of the scenario (Taylor's Story) to allow the participants to follow along, or you may put the scenario on a presentation slide.

Taylor and Breckin have been seeing each other for a few weeks. Breckin is older and is the star hockey player in the community. Taylor is upset and does not know whom to talk to about what happened the other night with Breckin. They were alone together kissing, and he wanted to take things further. She told him no and asked him to stop, but he would not listen. He made her feel guilty for saying no. Taylor thinks she was sexually assaulted, but she feels ashamed to tell anyone as she thinks it was her fault.

You keep trying to get a hold of Taylor because she has not been at school for two days, and she is ignoring your texts. You run into Breckin. When you ask him about Taylor, he tells you not to believe anything she says. You are worried, so you show up at her house. She is acting strangely, and you notice cut marks on her arms.

3. Have the participants go through the four steps of the Look, Listen, Link, Live© model by asking the questions below.

STEP 1: LOOK. In this step, we are looking for signs that a person is upset and in need of help.

What are the signs that tell you Taylor needs help?

Possible answers could include:

- Taylor is isolating herself from friends, and she is missing school.
- She is acting differently and has been self-harming by cutting herself.

STEP 2: LISTEN. In this step, we listen to the person without judgment.

How would you approach Taylor to talk to her? What would you say?

Possible answers could include:

- Let her know that you are worried about her as she has not been at school.
- Ask her if she is okay.
- Let her know that you care about her and that you are here to listen to her and support her.

STEP 3: LINK. In this step, we link the person to helping resources.

Where would you link Taylor for help and support?

Possible answers could include:

- You could go with her to see an adult she trusts, to talk about what happened.
- Taylor could be referred to a counsellor to deal with her feelings and to her stop self-harming.
- If you are afraid for Taylor and feel that she may be at risk for further harm from Breckin, you can tell an adult that you trust and ask for help.

STEP 4: LIVE. In this step, you take care of yourself and find healthy ways to cope. Helping a friend deal with a difficult situation can take a physical and emotional toll.

How would you take care of yourself, and what suggestions would you have for Taylor?

Possible answers could include:

- Write down your feelings in a journal.
- Play your favourite music or sport.
- Exercise.
- Spend time with a pet.
- Watch videos.
- Go to a movie.
- Get outside and hunt or hike, and enjoy the outdoors.
- Get creative and bead, sew, or write poetry or music.
- Eat healthy.
- Talk to friends and family to help work through your own feelings about the situation.
- Encourage Taylor to do things that make her happy.
- Hang out with Taylor, and show her that you care about her and support her.

4. To summarize, display the Look, Listen, Link, Live© content, using the presentation slides or the alternative method you have prepared.

Closing Comments

- There are many different types of dating relationships.
- Each of us has a responsibility to practice healthy relationships.
- We need to communicate effectively and respect one another's personal boundaries.
- Everyone has the right to be safe, and there are people you can talk to if you need help or support. Some examples are: friends, caregivers, parents, foster parents, aunts, uncles, elders, cadet and JCR leaders, and school personnel.

- Display the Kids Help Phone content, using the presentation slides or the alternative method you have prepared.

- Display the Community Resources content, using the presentation slide or the alternative method you have prepared.

Taylor's Story

Taylor and Breckin have been seeing each other for a few weeks. Breckin is older and is the star hockey player in the community. Taylor is upset and does not know whom to talk to about what happened the other night with Breckin. They were alone together kissing, and he wanted to take things further. She told him no and asked him to stop, but he would not listen. He made her feel guilty for saying no. Taylor thinks she was sexually assaulted, but she feels ashamed to tell anyone as she thinks it was her fault.

You keep trying to get a hold of Taylor because she has not been at school for two days, and she is ignoring your texts. You run into Breckin. When you ask him about Taylor, he tells you not to believe anything she says. You are worried, so you show up at her house. She is acting strangely, and you notice cut marks on her arms.

Using the Look, Listen, Link, Live© model, answer the following questions:

- STEP 1: LOOK. What are the signs that tell you Taylor needs help?
- STEP 2: LISTEN. How would you approach Taylor to talk to her? What would you say?
- STEP 3: LINK. Where would you link Taylor for help and support? Where would you link Breckin for help and support?
- STEP 4: LIVE. How would you take care of yourself, and what suggestions would you have for Taylor?

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