

# **RELATIONSHIP SPECTRUM ACTIVITY**

## **FOR HIGH SCHOOL**

**PROVIDED BY THE TEEN DATING VIOLENCE COMMITTEE OF THE SAN DIEGO  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNCIL**

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**BASED ON THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS TOOLKIT  
FROM [LOVEISRESPECT.ORG](http://LOVEISRESPECT.ORG)**

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**A CLASSROOM GROUP ACTIVITY WHERE STUDENTS LEARN TO IDENTIFY BEHAVIORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE**

1. Instructions
2. The Relationship Spectrum from [LovelsRespect.org](https://www.lovelsrespect.org)
3. Example behaviors to categorize as healthy, unhealthy, or abusive



## Relationship Spectrum Activity

### Instructions

**Time:** 45 minutes to 1 hour

#### Prep:

- Print one copy of the Spectrum and Examples per small group of students.
- Make sure the teacher / discussion leader has a copy of the Answer Key.
- Cut each set of examples into strips. Shuffle them up so that the order is random. Store each set in an envelope or bound together with a paper clip.
- Plan to wear something orange on the day of the activity. You will look amazing!!
- Identify a counselor on school grounds to assist if you have a student who is disturbed by any of the content in the activity.

#### Introduction: 5 minutes

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month! Orange is the awareness color representing Teen Dating Violence, or TDV. Why do you think orange is a good representation for this cause?

*There is no right or wrong answer. Because red represents Valentine's Day, you might talk about how orange has similarities to red, but isn't quite it. Similarly, unhealthy teen relationships might have some aspects that look romantic, but disguise something that is much more harmful.*

Discussions about violence can be distressing or triggering from some students. If at anytime you feel uncomfortable, let me know and you can leave the activity.

Every day millions of lives in the U.S. are devastated by violence. On average, 24 people a minute are victims of physical violence, rape or stalking by an intimate partner. That adds up to more than 12 million women and men a year. The reality is that this doesn't only affect adults. There are millions of young people in this country, many of whom may be students at our school, whose lives are affected—sometimes shaped—by violence.

The Facts

- One in three adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of emotional, physical or sexual abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds other types of youth violence.
- Only 33% of teens who were in a violent relationship ever told anyone about the abuse.
- Dating abuse affects around 1.5 million teens annually.

I'm sure you have seen these types of relationship portrayed in the media. Can you think of examples of unhealthy, abusive or violent behavior portrayed on television, in movies, or through song lyrics?

TV: *Maid* (Netflix, 13+) follows the story of a victim of domestic violence as she and her child fall into poverty.

Movies: Disney examples of violent characters are plentiful. Scar from *Lion King*, Jaffar from *Aladdin*, Gaston from *Beauty and the Beast*.

Songs: Olivia Rodrigo's *1 Step Forward, 3 Steps Back* tells of a controlling relationship that makes her live in fear.

### **Activity: 20 - 30 minutes**

Distribute the Relationship Spectrum and Examples cut into strips to each group. Ask them to read the Spectrum describing different relationship behaviors. Consider a "popcorn" style reading first the healthy column, then unhealthy and abusive.

After reading about the behaviors, ask each group to sort the examples into three columns. Students can take turns pulling from the examples, reading the example aloud, and having the group discuss whether it is healthy, unhealthy or abusive.

Extension: If time allows, ask students to create some of their own examples and see if their group can categorize them. Write down their own examples for the follow-up discussion.

### **Discussion: 20 - 25 minutes**

Reveal the answer key and ask students:

*Which behaviors were easiest to categorize?*

*Which behaviors did the group discuss the most?*

*Which behaviors did your group put into the wrong category? Why might it be confusing to know where to place this behavior?*

*What additional examples did your group create?*

*Which of these behaviors would cause you to end a relationship? And Why?*

*What resources do you have if you or someone you know experiences these behaviors?*

Trusted adults - parents, teachers, counselors, coaches, etc.

LevelsRespect

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Text love is to 22522

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# RELATIONSHIPS EXIST ON A SPECTRUM

All relationships exist on a spectrum, from healthy to abusive to somewhere in between. Below, we outline behaviors that occur in healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships.

## HEALTHY

A **healthy relationship** means that both you and your partner are:

**Communicating:** You talk openly about problems, listen to each other and respect each other's opinions.

**Respectful:** You value each other as you are. You respect each other's emotional, digital and sexual boundaries.

**Trusting:** You believe what your partner has to say. You do not feel the need to "prove" each other's trustworthiness.

**Honest:** You are honest with each other, but can still keep some things private.

**Equal:** You make decisions together and hold each other to the same standards.

**Enjoying personal time:** You both can enjoy spending time apart, alone or with others. You respect each other's need for time apart.

## UNHEALTHY

You may be in an **unhealthy relationship** if one or both partners is:

**Not communicating:** When problems arise, you fight or you don't discuss them at all.

**Disrespectful:** One or both partners is not considerate of the other's feelings and/or personal boundaries.

**Not trusting:** One partner doesn't believe what the other says, or feels entitled to invade their privacy.

**Dishonest:** One or both partners tells lies.

**Trying to take control:** One partner feels their desires and choices are more important.

**Only spending time with your partner:** Your partner's community is the only one you socialize in.

## ABUSIVE

**Abuse** is occurring in a relationship when one partner:

**Communicates** in a way that is hurtful, threatening, insulting or demeaning.

**Disrespects** the feelings, thoughts, decisions, opinions or physical safety of the other.

**Physically hurts** or injures the other partner by hitting, slapping, choking, pushing or shoving.

**Blames** the other partner for their harmful actions, makes excuses for abusive actions and/or minimizes the abusive behavior.

**Controls and isolates** the other partner by telling them what to wear, who they can hang out with, where they can go and/or what they can do.

**Pressures or forces** the other partner to do things they don't want to do; threatens, hurts or blackmails their partner if they resist or say no.

**Your partner tells you how special you are and how much they care about you.**

**Your partner uses a name or pronoun that you don't like but stops using it once you correct them or ask them not to.**

**Your partner appreciates your passions and encourages you to do the things you love.**

**You miss your partner when you go on vacation with your family but you have a really good time anyway.**

**You had a really good day and can't wait to tell your partner because you know they will be excited about to hear about it.**

## Relationship Spectrum - Examples

**You and your partner feel like you can share things with each other, but you also feel like you can keep some things private.**

**If you have a disagreement your partner uses the silent treatment and won't talk to you for days.**

**Your partner says you don't really love them because you want to go to a movie with a friend instead of spending time alone with them.**

**You always feel like your partner's wishes and goals come first.**

**You and your partner agree to take the night off from texting or calling each other, but while you're out with your friends your partner calls and texts you multiple times to say they miss you.**



## Relationship Spectrum - Examples

**Your partner refuses to spend time with your family, but still expects that you spend time with theirs.**

**Your partner texts you more than you want them to and gets angry if you don't respond.**

**Your partner controls your FB and other social media accounts.**

**After an argument, your partner blocks the doorway and takes your keys to prevent you from leaving.**

**Your partner randomly stops by your job even though you told them it made you uncomfortable.**

**Your partner threatens to tell other people about your sex life or share private photos or texts.**

**Your partner gives you gifts but demands something in return, like money or sexual acts.**

**Your partner demands access to your bank account.**

**When you go to your favorite restaurant and order something different, your partner acts disgusted and calls you stupid for ordering it.**

**Your partner tells you they wouldn't hit you if you just did things the right way.**

## Relationship Spectrum - Key

### Healthy

Your partner tells you how special you are and how much they care about you

Your partner uses a name or pronoun that you don't like but stops using it once you correct them or ask them not to

Your partner appreciates your passions and encourages you to do the things you love

You miss your partner when you go on vacation with your family but you have a really good time anyway

You had a really good day and can't wait to tell your partner because you know they will be excited about to hear about it

You and your partner feel like you can share things with each other, but you also feel like you can keep some things private

### Unhealthy

If you have a disagreement your partner uses the silent treatment and won't talk to you for days

Your partner says you don't really love them because you want to go to a movie with a friend instead of spending time alone with them

You always feel like your partner's wishes and goals come first

You and your partner agree to take the night off from texting or calling each other, but while you're out with your friends your partner calls and texts you multiple times to say they miss you

Your partner refuses to spend time with your family, but still expects that you spend time with theirs.

Your partner texts you more than you want them to and gets angry if you don't respond

### Abusive

Your partner controls your FB and other social media accounts

After an argument, your partner blocks the doorway and takes your keys to prevent you from leaving

Your partner randomly stops by your job even though you told them it made you uncomfortable

Your partner threatens to tell other people about your sex life or share private photos or texts

Your partner gives you gifts but demands something in return, like money or sexual acts

Your partner demands access to your bank account

When you go to your favorite restaurant and order something different, your partner acts disgusted and calls you stupid for ordering it

Your partner tells you they wouldn't hit you if you just did things the right way