

RELATIONSHIP SPECTRUM ACTIVITY

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

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

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**BASED ON THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATORS
TOOLKIT FROM 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 [LovesRespect.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

Chat loveisrespect.org

Text love is to 22522

Call. 1-866-331-9474

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	UNHEALTHY	ABUSIVE
<p>A healthy relationship means that both you and your partner are:</p> <p>Communicating: You talk openly about problems, listen to each other and respect each other's opinions.</p> <p>Respectful: You value each other as you are. You respect each other's emotional, digital and sexual boundaries.</p> <p>Trusting: You believe what your partner has to say. You do not feel the need to "prove" each other's trustworthiness.</p> <p>Honest: You are honest with each other, but can still keep some things private.</p> <p>Equal: You make decisions together and hold each other to the same standards.</p> <p>Enjoying personal time: You both can enjoy spending time apart, alone or with others. You respect each other's need for time apart.</p>	<p>You may be in an unhealthy relationship if one or both partners is:</p> <p>Not communicating: When problems arise, you fight or you don't discuss them at all.</p> <p>Disrespectful: One or both partners is not considerate of the other's feelings and/or personal boundaries.</p> <p>Not trusting: One partner doesn't believe what the other says, or feels entitled to invade their privacy.</p> <p>Dishonest: One or both partners tells lies.</p> <p>Trying to take control: One partner feels their desires and choices are more important.</p> <p>Only spending time with your partner: Your partner's community is the only one you socialize in.</p>	<p>Abuse is occurring in a relationship when one partner:</p> <p>Communicates in a way that is hurtful, threatening, insulting or demeaning.</p> <p>Disrespects the feelings, thoughts, decisions, opinions or physical safety of the other.</p> <p>Physically hurts or injures the other partner by hitting, slapping, choking, pushing or shoving.</p> <p>Blames the other partner for their harmful actions, makes excuses for abusive actions and/or minimizes the abusive behavior.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Relationship Spectrum Examples

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

Your friend uses a name or refers to you in a way that you don't like, but when you ask them to stop, they do.

Your friend appreciates your interests and encourages you to do the things you love.

You miss your friend when you go on vacation with your family but you have a really great time anyway.

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

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

Your friend builds you up, and does not put you down.

You are able to talk about things that bother you with your friend.

Your friend listens to your ideas with an open mind.

You and your friend find middle ground when you disagree.

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

Your friend says you don't really care about them because you want to go to a movie with someone else instead of spending time alone with them.

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

You and your friend agree to take the night off from texting or calling each other. Your friend calls and texts you multiple times to say they miss you.

Your friend refuses to spend time with your friend group but still expects you to spend time with theirs.

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

Your friend gets angry when you share pictures of you with other friends.

Your friend controls your social media accounts, email, or passwords.

After an argument your friend blocks the doorways and prevents you from leaving.

Your friend threatens to tell other people things you've asked them to keep private.

Your friend randomly stops by your house even though you've told them it makes you uncomfortable.

Your friend gives you gifts, but demands something in return like money or attention.

Your friend demands access to your money.

You go to your favorite restaurant and order something different. Your friend acts disgusted and calls you stupid for ordering it.

Your friend tells you they wouldn't hurt or hit you, if you just did things the right way.

Your friend dictates who you are allowed to hang out with.

Relationship Spectrum Key

Healthy

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

Your friend uses a name or refers to you in a way that you don't like, but when you ask them to stop, they do.

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Unhealthy

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

Your friend says you don't really care about them because you want to go to a movie with someone else instead of spending time alone with them.

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

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Your friend refuses to spend time with your friend group but still expects you to spend time with theirs.

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

Your friend gets angry when you share pictures of you with other friends.

Abusive

Your friend controls your social media accounts, email, or passwords.

After an argument your friend blocks the doorways and prevents you from leaving.

Your friend threatens to tell other people things you've asked them to keep private.

Your friend randomly stops by your house even though you've told them it makes you uncomfortable.

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