

Relationships and Sexuality

3



This strand focuses on relationships. Relationship difficulties experienced by young people in friendships, family relationships and romantic/intimate relationships will be examined. You will analyse and develop communication and relationship skills and learn to identify signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Lesson 14	Building Healthy Relationships	XXX	Lesson 17	Consent	XXX
Lesson 15	Recognising Unhealthy Relationships	XXX	Lesson 18	Sex and Relationships	XXX
Lesson 16	Understanding Sexuality	XXX	Lesson 19	Sexual Health	XXX
			Lesson 20	STIs	XXX
			Lesson 21	Reproductive Health	XXX

LESSON 14

Building Healthy Relationships

At the end of this lesson, you will:

- ▶ Reflect on the various relationships you have.
- ▶ Appreciate some of the factors that contribute to a healthy relationship.
- ▶ Understand the importance of setting personal boundaries.
- ▶ Practise asserting personal boundaries.



KEY WORDS

Platonic relationship
Relationship boundaries



LEARNING OUTCOMES: 3.1, 3.3, 3.4

Wellbeing
indicators



Aware



Connected



Resilient



Respected

Healthy Relationships

Relationships are an important part of all our lives. We have many relationships throughout life: relationships with friends, peers, partners, boyfriends, girlfriends, pets, family members, teammates and neighbours. A healthy relationship should have a positive impact on your wellbeing and should make you feel good about yourself. Think about the various relationships you have in your life. They are all different – some may be romantic, some are platonic, and some are family.



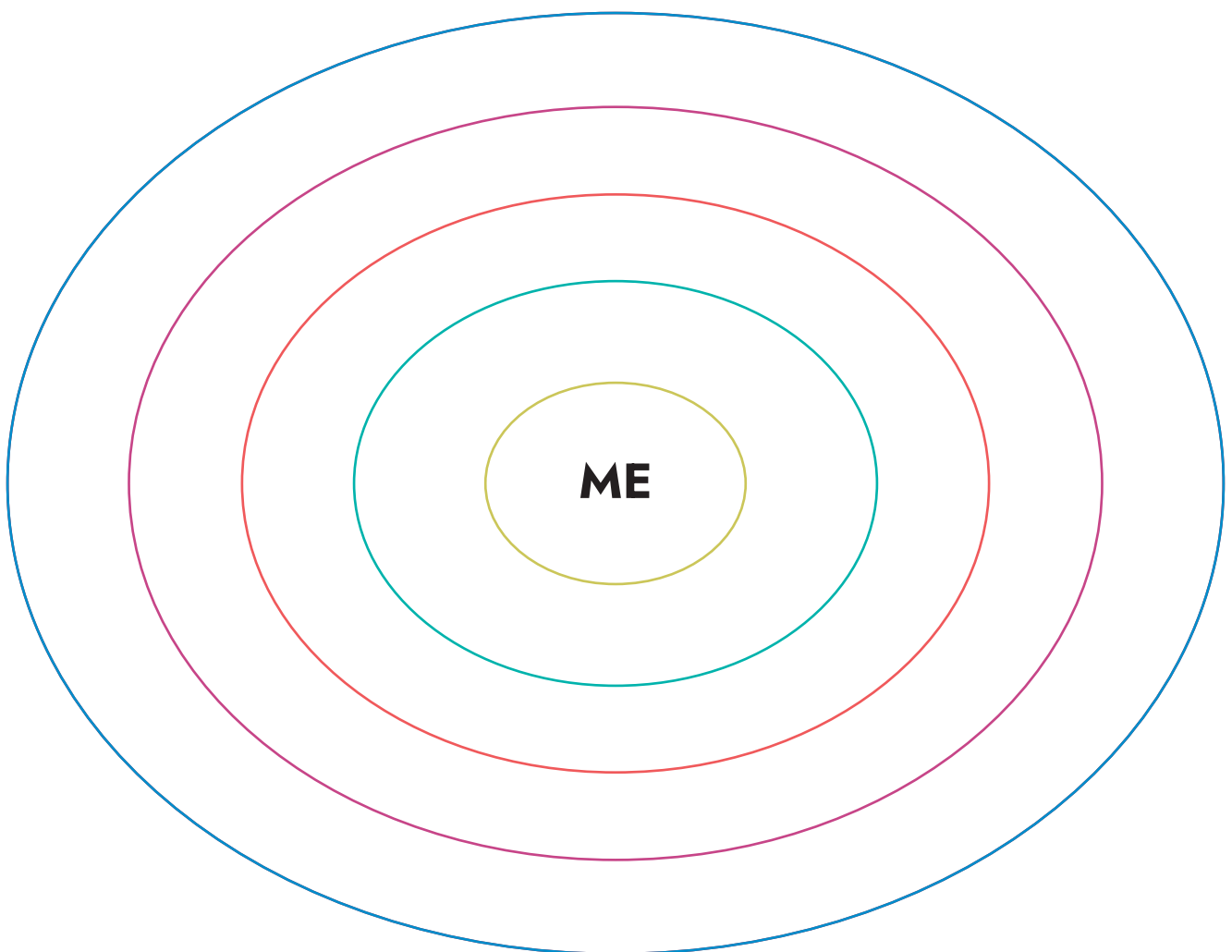
A **platonic relationship** is one in which two people share a close bond but do not have a sexual relationship.



My Relationships

The following exercise is designed to help you identify and recognise the variety of relationships you have in your life. On the circle below, show some of the relationships you have by writing a person's initials in the relevant space on the circle. You might include family relationships, friends and other relationships. If you feel you have a very close relationship with a person, place them close to you on the circle. If you feel you have a more distant relationship with a person, place them further away from you on the circle.

You will not have to share your answers with the rest of the class.



What Contributes to a Healthy Relationship?

Communication

Good communication is central to a healthy relationship and your wellbeing. You should feel comfortable talking about anything, from everyday life to any worries or concerns you may have. You should be able to say how you feel, and feel like the other person is listening to you. You don't always have to agree with each other, but you should feel that your choices and opinions are respected, and you should show respect for the other person's choices, opinions and values. (Remember: In First Year and Second Year, you learned that a *value* is something that is important to you and can guide how you behave in life.)

Consent

As you have already learned, **consent** is when we freely give permission or agree to something. Consenting to sexual activity means that both people give consent to any sexual activity, *before* it happens. In Ireland, the age of consent for sex is 17 for boys and girls.

If you feel pressured to do something you don't want to do, or you are unsure about, then it's not consent. Consent is a clear and resounding yes. Just because someone doesn't say 'no', does not mean they have given consent. If a partner goes silent or does not respond to your touch, then they are not consenting to sex and should not be pressured to do so.

Consent can be **verbal** or **non-verbal**, and it is an ongoing process. This means regular checking in on what you both want. You both have the right to change your mind at any point or time. Just because someone engaged in a certain sexual activity once, does not mean that they consent to doing it again. To check if a partner consents, ask them: *Is this okay? Does this feel good? Do you want to continue?*

The Health Service Executive (HSE) summarise this by stating that:



To give consent, the person must understand that they have a choice, including the choice to:

- Give consent
- Refuse consent
- Withdraw consent.

Being True to Yourself

In a healthy relationship, you should not have to act or behave a certain way to make the other person happy. They should accept you for who you are. Sometimes people feel pressured to behave a certain way, or to do things they don't want to do. They might feel pressured because they think a certain behaviour is expected, maybe because of something they heard from peers or friends or what they saw on TV or social media.

Pornography is now a lot more accessible, and if a teenager watches it, they might think that they should behave or act a certain way. Remember that pornography is acting and does not show a realistic view of relationships, sex or sexual activity.

Outside Interests

In a healthy relationship, you should care for each other and enjoy spending time together, but still spend time on your own interests and friendships outside the relationship. It is not healthy for the relationship to be the only important thing in your life. You should still have other friendships and maintain family relationships.

Respect

Respect is essential in any relationship. In romantic relationships, it is crucial to value your partner's opinions and boundaries and allow them to be themselves. Small gestures such as listening attentively, expressing appreciation, and treating each other with kindness contribute to a respectful relationship. In platonic relationships, you can show respect to your friends by supporting them, being honest yet caring, and respecting their personal space. Respect can be shown in family relationships when family members acknowledge each other's feelings and communicate openly. We can also show respect when using social media, for example not sharing pictures or videos of a person online without their consent.

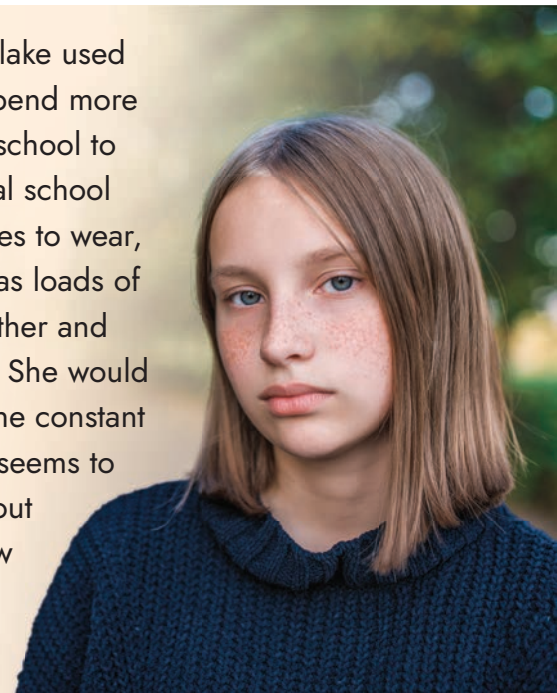
It is important for teenagers to remember that respect is a two-way street. We should show respect and expect to be treated with kindness, understanding and consideration in return.

CASE STUDY: Blake and Robin

Read the case study about Blake and Robin's relationship and answer the questions below.

1. What signs are there that this relationship is not healthy?
2. How is the relationship affecting Blake's wellbeing? How is it affecting Robin's wellbeing?
3. If you were Robin's friend, what advice would you give?
4. If you were Blake's friend, what advice would you give?

Blake and Robin have been seeing each other for six months. Blake used to play basketball but has stopped going to some trainings to spend more time with Robin. Robin spends a lot of time getting ready after school to meet Blake. She would never meet up just dressed in her normal school clothes and with no make-up on. She borrows her friend's clothes to wear, because she feels that her own just aren't cool enough. Blake has loads of followers on social media and loves taking photos of them together and posting them, so Robin always feels pressured to look her best. She would rather not be in the photos and just hang out together without the constant posing, but she feels like she can't really say this to Blake, who seems to be mad about her. Some people have left hurtful comments about Robin on the photos. Blake tells her just to ignore them, but now Robin is starting to dread the comments on the photos more and more and is making excuses not to meet up with Blake.



Establishing Healthy Relationship Boundaries

Last year you learned a little about personal boundaries. Personal boundaries are the physical and emotional limits that we set to protect ourselves from others. You need to know your own personal boundaries and you need to communicate these to the other person to have a healthy relationship.

Setting and asserting boundaries for yourself, as well as respecting the boundaries of others, can help everyone to feel more confident and secure in the relationship. Setting personal boundaries means you get to decide what you are comfortable with doing or not doing.

Each person has their own personal boundaries, as does each relationship. Being able to say no without feeling guilty is a sign of a healthy relationship boundary. This might mean saying no to a partner asking you for a favour or to a partner asking you to do something you don't want to do. You don't need to offer excuses or feel bad for asserting and prioritising yourself.

Examples of relationship boundaries:

- Limits on where a partner can or cannot touch you
- Being clear on what you and your partner will share about your relationship on social media and what you will keep private
- Never tolerating dishonesty or cheating
- Not calling each other disrespectful names.

Asserting your personal boundaries might sound like ...



Relationship boundaries

are the limits put in place by both partners in a romantic relationship.

Stop – I don't like that!

I only have 10 minutes to talk because I need to study.

Thanks for asking me, but I need some time on my own tonight.

I don't feel comfortable here. I want to go.

Please don't do that!

I'm not okay with you talking about my family like that.





PAIR WORK: Asserting Boundaries

Practise asserting boundaries by saying how you would act and what you would say in the following situations. The first one is done for you.

<p>Situation A</p> <p>Your boyfriend keeps suggesting that you send him nude pictures. He says that lots of couples do that, but it makes you feel uncomfortable and you like your relationship as it is.</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>I know you think I'd like it, but it makes me uncomfortable. I am happy with things as they are. Can you please respect how I feel about this and stop asking me?</p>	<p>Situation B</p> <p>Your friend calls you at midnight to talk about their relationship problems, again. You have to be up at 6 a.m. for swimming, but your friend says they really need to talk.</p> <p>Response:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Situation C</p> <p>A good friend asks you out on a date, but you have no interest in them romantically. You want to say no without hurting their feelings.</p> <p>Response:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Situation D</p> <p>You missed a few days of school due to a medical condition. Your classmate asks you what was wrong with you, but you feel that it's personal and you don't want to tell them. You also don't want to be rude.</p> <p>Response:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Reflect

<p>3</p>	<p>3 topics we discussed today</p> <input type="text"/>
<p>2</p>	<p>2 places or people I could find out more information from on this lesson</p> <input type="text"/>
<p>1</p>	<p>1 action I can take, based on what I learned today</p> <input type="text"/>

Dialogue: Remember to talk to my parents/family/guardians about ...

Parent's/guardian's signature

(Your teacher will tell you if this should be signed each week.)

LESSON 15

Recognising Unhealthy Relationships

At the end of this lesson, you will:

- ▶ Recognise behaviours that indicate an unhealthy relationship.
- ▶ Identify signs of unhealthy relationships in young people.
- ▶ Understand the importance of ending unhealthy relationships.



KEY WORDS

Conflict



LEARNING OUTCOMES 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

Wellbeing indicators



Aware



Connected



Resilient



Respected

Recognising Unhealthy Relationships

In the previous lesson, you learned about building and maintaining healthy relationships. It is important that you can recognise the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy relationship.

A Healthy Relationship

Healthy relationships can provide us with support in challenging times and can improve our mental health and self-esteem. A healthy relationship supports our wellbeing and can make us feel good about ourselves.

An Unhealthy Relationship

On the other hand, an unhealthy relationship can have the opposite effect and can leave us feeling anxious, scared, alone, unsure or confused. An unhealthy relationship can damage self-esteem and can have a negative impact on mental health.

All relationships have challenges and ups and downs, but these can be overcome with good communication and respect. No relationship is perfect, and we must remember that the relationships we see on social media are not a true representation of real relationships – they generally just show the best bits. A relationship should help you feel confident, secure, respected and trusted.

In a healthy relationship, you should be able to talk about what you want and need. You should be able to do what feels right for you and you should feel that you are listened to and respected. If that's not the case, it might be time to end the relationship.



GROUP WORK: Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

1. Think of a healthy relationship (friendship or a couple) that you have read about or have seen on TV or social media. What kind of things do the people do or say that makes you think it is a healthy relationship?
2. Now think of an unhealthy relationship (friendship or a couple) that you have read about or have seen on TV or social media. Give examples of how the relationship is unhealthy, in your opinion.

Write some words on the graphic below to summarise what you have discussed.

A Healthy Relationship




An Unhealthy Relationship



Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship

Jealousy and controlling behaviour	If a partner tries to control what you do, who you see and/or what you wear, it is a sign of an unhealthy relationship.
Criticising and belittling	If a partner is constantly criticising you, making you feel bad about yourself or saying hurtful things, it is not a healthy relationship.
Intensity	Healthy relationships should move at a pace that everyone is comfortable with. If a partner comes on very strong, puts you under pressure to commit, or is over the top with extravagant gifts and declarations of love, it can be a sign of an unhealthy relationship.
Constant arguing	There is conflict in every relationship, and it is normal to have arguments and disagreements from time to time, but some couples go from intense arguments one day to being totally loved-up the next day, and the underlying issues are never really dealt with. You don't have to agree with everything the other person says or does, but if you are constantly arguing and then making up, it can be a sign of an unhealthy relationship.



 **Conflict** is a disagreement resulting from different needs, wants or demands.



PAIR WORK: Recognising Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

Below is a group of statements. Each statement is a sign of a healthy or an unhealthy relationship. Use a **red** pen to circle the statements that you think indicate an unhealthy relationship. Use a **blue** pen to circle the statements that you think indicate a healthy relationship.

They often make you feel guilty.

Your views and opinions are respected, even if you disagree on something.

You feel anxious or unwell when you know you're going to see them.

You worry about setting them off and feel like you have to watch what you say.

You can say how you feel.

You feel confident.

You feel useful.

You feel depressed and worthless.

They text and call you constantly.

You feel trapped.

They constantly put you down and make you feel bad about yourself.

You feel happy around them.

You can relax when you are together.

You can act like yourself.

You change yourself to please them.

You feel positive and comfortable about yourself.

They break your trust.

You could be loving and hating the person at the same time.

You are arguing one day, and things are great the next.

You feel like it's your responsibility to fix things.

They are jealous of your other friends.

You feel loved.

You often feel angry with yourself or them.

You feel scared.

You have lost confidence in yourself.

You feel wanted and needed.

They make you feel confused.

What Can I Do If My Relationships Are Unhealthy?

It can be difficult to deal with an unhealthy relationship. You should talk to someone about what's going on. Talk with a friend, a parent, a guardian, or another trusted adult. If you can't think of someone you can talk to, consider contacting a support service such as Childline.

If you are in an unhealthy relationship or friendship, it's important to do something about it. Try to talk to the other person about how you feel. If they're willing to listen and to work on it, you might be able to find ways to make it work.

If the other person is not willing to listen, or if they keep repeating the same behaviour, then it's time to end the relationship. This can be difficult, especially if you've been close for a long time, or if it's someone you see often, such as a classmate. Explain to them why you want to end the relationship and ask them to respect your decision. It's important to show respect and empathy when a relationship has ended. We can do this by not gossiping with other people about the person after the relationship has ended.

Getting Help

Too Into You

Too Into You offers an instant messaging support service which is private and confidential. You can chat to them if you are worried about yourself or a friend. If you are worried that your relationship is not healthy, you can take the quiz on their website. You can also read about others who were stuck in an unhealthy or abusive relationship.

 www.toointoyou.ie



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