

CWK Marriage and Family:

Spotlight Marriage and Relationships

Lesson Title: Healthy Communication in a Relationship

Grade Level: High School

Extension for: SEL Spotlight High School

Topic: Marriage and Family Project: Elements of Healthy Communication within an Intimate Relationship

Essential Question: What are healthy ways to communicate with an intimate partner?

Materials and Preparation

- A resource for further reading and support can be found at www.loveisrespect.org website operated by the National Domestic Violence Hotline.
- Posters or poster sized pieces of paper
- Markers and writing utensils

Procedures

Review and restate session norms. These should remind students how to interact and communicate respectfully. The topic involves intimate relationships and should be discussed appropriately. Essential question should be prominently displayed.

[2-3 minutes]

Activity 1

Have students stand up and go to an open space in the room. This activity is a common improvisational theatre exercise called "Group Order". Facilitator will ask students to line up several times by various criteria. The facilitator may use the following suggestions or come up with additional ones.

- Facilitator will say, "line up in order by shoe size".
- "Line up in order by age"
- "Line up in order by shirt color" (do not use in a school where gangs are prevalent)
- "Line up in order by height"
- "Line up in order by eye color"
- "Line up in order by math" (or anything silly)

Depending on the group, it may be necessary to add an extra rule where the facilitator chooses only a few (or even one or two) students to talk with each line up. This will make it impossible for one or two typical leaders to dominate the activity. If the facilitator does this, make sure and change the students who are allowed to talk with every new line up.

Debrief with students by discussing that the goal is for students to see the importance of communication, they should start to see that there is no one right way for students to line up (even when lining up by height students could line up tallest to shortest or shortest to tallest).

[10-15 minutes]

Activity 2

Individual Reflection

Ask students the following questions. Give students time to think and possibly write down some answers or thoughts.

- Was there only one right/correct way to line up in the activity?
- When you are in an intimate relationship, do you think there are some expectations that apply to all aspects of the relationship (examples could be we don't date other people, or we should always talk about how we feel)?
- What about other parts of an intimate relationship, are there situations where there are no clear-cut expectations (like in the line-up activity we did a few minutes ago)?

After students have reflected, have them share some thoughts. You may wish to read students' comments aloud to the group to keep the comment anonymous and less emotionally charged.

[10 minutes]

Activity 3

Group Activity

Discuss with students the following suggestions for better communication within a healthy intimate relationship. These come from the [loveisrespect](http://loveisrespect.com) website.

Find the Right Time

- Avoid times when your partner is distracted. Schedule a time to talk if you need to.

Talk Face to Face

- Texting is not a good way to talk about something that is really important.

Do Not Attack

- Remember our lessons about using "I" statements.

Be Honest

- It is always important for someone you care about to know how you feel.

Check Your Body Language

- Show you are listening respectfully.

Use the 48 Hour Rule

- If you are angry, it is a good idea to wait 48 hours before discussing.

The facilitator may wish to show the webpage with this list to the group, it is found at <https://www.loveisrespect.org/healthy-relationships/communicate-better/>

Using your knowledge of students in the group, place students in groups of 2, 3 or 4. Give each group a poster and markers.

In their groups assign one of the suggestions for healthy communication. Each group will create an informational poster focused on their group's communication tip.

After groups have completed their posters, have each group share their posters and describe the communication tip for the entire group. Ask questions as appropriate focus on being positive and offering good advice. Facilitator should be mindful that abusive relationships are covered in other sessions and attempt to keep students focused on positive communication in a non-abusive relationship.

[20-30 minutes]

Conclusion:

Debriefing questions.

- Why is it important to have a plan for healthy communication in an intimate relationship?
- Why is it better to talk with an intimate partner when both people are neither angry or distracted?
- Is it sometimes hard to be honest while also communicating in a respectful way?