



# Healthy Relationships for Guys



Funded by Victim Services  
Manitoba Justice

[teentalk.ca](http://teentalk.ca)

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## Introduction

This curriculum was developed in an effort to engage young men and boys to take a stand against male violence against women and girls and to mobilize action that fosters equality, respect and solidarity. Specific attention is paid to understanding some of the root causes of gender-based violence and the connection to structural and social inequalities. The curriculum focuses on discrimination and oppression and explores concepts such as privilege and entitlement. It also aims to show self-esteem, mental wellness and emotional self-regulation as foundational to having and building healthy relationships.

The curriculum can be presented in its entirety in five separate sessions, as individual modules or by combining two or more sessions into longer two-to-three-hour sessions with breaks. The benefit of each session being about an hour is that it can be offered within a typical high school class period. It can also be adapted, or the activities can be used individually to fit the unique needs of any group, including alongside cultural teachings.

The curriculum was created with the intention that it be facilitated by someone who identifies as a man or male who can role-model healthy masculinity. A male facilitator may be more likely to reach young men who might not respond the same way with a female-identified facilitator<sup>1</sup> as these youth may dismiss discussions around masculinity as out of touch with their experiences.<sup>2</sup> That being said, this curriculum can be facilitated by anyone of any gender as long as there is a focus on creating a sense of trust with the youth and a safe place for them to engage authentically.

**Note to Facilitator:** Ideally, these sessions will include a lot of activity and discussions and therefore most of the scripted sections could be adapted or paraphrased. This can look many different ways and the number of questions can be reduced or increased, depending on the youth and their willingness to participate. If youth are not actively participating, the facilitator can decide to use more of a storytelling or lecture style. Throughout the curriculum, we have used **bolded** words to represent the main points. We would encourage you to say anything in “**bold quotations**” exactly as written, as these are either helpful questions or pieces in which language is very important. The

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<sup>1</sup> Calgary Sexual Health Centre. (2013). Re-imagined masculinities: Unfolding the meaning and effect of the Wiseguyz program. In Calgary Sexual Health Centre (pp. 1–82). <https://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/media/WiseGuyzFinalResearchReportSeptember2013-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Katz, J. (2019). The Macho paradox: Why some men hurt women and how all men can help. Sourcebooks, Incorporated.

objectives, instructions, and FYI/ notes sections are there for your information as the facilitator.

## Tips for Service Providers

- Arrange chairs in a circle (including the facilitator). This helps to create an inclusive environment for sharing and learning.
- If working outside of the confines of a classroom time allotment, it may be helpful to build additional arrival time, breaks, and evaluation time into your sessions with youth.
- Be okay with silence. Allow time and space for youth to think and process.
- Provide colouring sheets/blank paper and markers/pencil crayons. This can help some people to focus better and retain more of what they experience.
- Having light snacks or candies can be an incentive to participate and help create a welcoming environment.
- Videos can be shown directly from YouTube through a projector, smartboard, or laptop (if a small group).
- Hand out evaluation forms (sample included at end of this document). At the end of each session, give the youth a form to provide feedback on the workshop. The form asks for their opinions, what they learned and any questions or comments they may have. You can answer their questions in the session immediately, at the next session or via email or personal follow-up if it is the last session of the series. This form also gives insight into what knowledge the youth have gained from the session. It is important to inform the youth that their comments are confidential but not anonymous in the event of disclosure of abuse. (See *Reporting of Child Protection and Child Abuse: Handbook and Protocols for MB Service Providers*.<sup>3</sup>)
- Hand out Resource Sheet (included at end of this document). At the end of the first session, the youth are given a resource sheet with important phone numbers, websites and some activities. Bring extras to every session in case participants want a new Resource Sheet or more copies to share with others.

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<sup>3</sup>Government of Manitoba. (2013). Reporting of child protection and child abuse: Handbook and protocols for Manitoba service providers. In Psychological Association of Manitoba (pp. 1–152). [https://www.cpmb.ca/documents/Reporting\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.cpmb.ca/documents/Reporting_Handbook.pdf)

For additional resources, check out **[teentalk.ca/service-providers/](https://teentalk.ca/service-providers/)**. The Teen Talk Service Provider Manual focuses on sexual and mental health (including substance use) and dating relationships. The Teen Talk Tool Kit is available to educators and service providers who are looking for activities to run with youth to supplement their educational sessions. Handouts for each topic are also online.

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# Session 1: Introduction to Values and Sexuality (65 mins)

## Goals

- Introduce the topics of the five-session series.
- Create a welcoming environment that fosters participation and safety for youth.
- Reflect on personal ideas and values related to sexuality and relationships.

## Have Ready

- Paper and pens for each person
- Colouring sheets and markers/pencil crayons
- Whiteboard or flipcharts
- 3 signs for Values Activity (Agree, Disagree and Neutral)
- Copies of daily evaluation (for every session) – Appendix C

## Workshop Introduction (15 mins)

### Instructions

- **Introduce yourself.** For example, Teen Talk would say, “Hi, my name is... We are here from Teen Talk. Teen Talk is a Youth Health Education Program based out of Klinik Community Health. What we do is talk to youth about birth control, STI, mental health, and relationships.”
- **Try not to make assumptions.** For example, “Today we are going to be talking about relationships. Even if you’re not dating or interested in dating, we are here to provide everyone with accurate information that people can use now or in the future for ourselves, or to help out friends.”
- **Mention confidentiality.** For example, “The only time we will share anything is if someone discloses something like abuse.”
- **Link youth to resources.** Youth-friendly health clinic, nursing station, Elders, school counsellors, websites, etc. Be sure to mention the location and hours, services accessible to youth, any costs, and whether it is drop-in or appointment only.

## Check-in (go around) (5 mins)

- Ask youth to take turns sharing their name and what superpower they have (special talent or character trait).
- The facilitator should participate in sharing as well.

## Group Agreement and Land Acknowledgement (5 mins)

### Goals

- Establish group norms to create a safer space throughout the training.

### Instructions

- Go around the circle and have people volunteer to say what would make them feel comfortable and safe in this group.
- Write these answers on a flip chart and hang it on the wall. Put check-marks beside repeated points.

### Ensure that the following ones are included:

- **Right to pass**
- **Respect**
- **No put-downs**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Be on time so we can start and end on time**
- **Cell phones (off? Vibrate? Use at break?)**
- **Spelling and grammar don't matter here**
- **Take care of yourself** (use the washroom or get a snack if you need to)
- **Participation**

"I come here with a lot of respect for all of you and I ask that you show respect to me, the topic, and each other. One way we can all show respect is to listen when someone else is speaking. **"For me, part of respect is acknowledging The Land."** (Note: What follows is an example of the Land Acknowledgment Teen Talk uses when in Winnipeg and the surrounding area. Please adapt for your location and organization. Land acknowledgements are best when heart-led)

Ininew and Anishinaabe (Cree and Ojibwe) people have had a relationship with this land since the beginning of time. We are also in the heart of the Métis Nation. Now that Canada exists we are in treaty # 1 territory. As a person



working for a non-indigenous organization, it is important to acknowledge how grateful I am to live, play and work on this land. Thank you for having me in your class/space. I am grateful to be here today to talk with you.

**Over the next few sessions, we are going to be talking about and doing some activities around the topics of self-esteem, body image and masculinity; mental wellness; and communication, consent and dating relationships.**

## **Male Perspective Disclaimer (2 mins)**

**“Unfortunately, we live in a society that often only recognizes two genders, men and women. That’s called a gender binary. We know that in reality there are many ways to express our genders and it goes way beyond just female and male. To try and move past this, we need to work from the binary for now because the gender binary is so powerful. The issues that we will be talking about actually stem from the binary and the way that we’re taught to fit into specific gender roles (how we’re taught to act out “masculinity” or “being a man”). That’s why we will be having a lot of our discussions from the “male” perspective. We also recognize that toxic masculinity can be acted out or expressed by people of other genders and in many different types of relationships, not just heterosexual ones.”**

## **Icebreaker: Genital Salad Game\* (10 mins)**

### **Goals**

- To destigmatize body parts and normalize using technical words for genitals.
- To energize the group through body movement.

### **Have Ready**

- Chairs in a circle with no other furniture or barriers in the way. You need one fewer chair than the number of people playing.

### **Instructions**

- Have students sit in a circle (without desks), facing each other.
- Assign each participant a body part name (penis, vagina, or anus).

- Stand in the middle of the circle and explain that the person standing in the middle of the circle will call out a body part name. When that body part is called out, participants who have been assigned this group will stand up and switch chairs. Whoever is left standing will move to the middle of the circle and call out the next body part name.
- 'Genital salad' can be called out for all participants to change spots.

(FYI: This activity is based off on a similar "Fruit Salad" activity and is named "Genital Salad" in reference to the use of genital names in place of fruit.)

## **What is Sexuality? – Group Brainstorm (5 mins)**

### **Goals**

- Explore the concept of sexuality.

### **Have Ready**

- Write the word Sexuality in the middle of the whiteboard or flip chart paper

### **Activity Introduction**

- Ask youth: **What do you think of when you hear or see the word "sexuality?"** Write their answers around the word sexuality
- Explain the following and write anything missing **"Sexuality is really about who we are in the world, and how we show that to other people. Some of the things that influence our sexuality are"**

### **Debrief**

- **Our sexuality can impact our lives in a lot of ways. We are all born with our sexuality. It grows and changes throughout our lives.** In this workshop, we will be talking about some of the things that influence our sexuality and what some of our rights are when it comes to our sexuality.

- **We know people may have both negative and positive experiences related to their sexuality. We recognize that these conversations can feel challenging depending on your personal experiences.** If for any reason you are having a hard time it's okay to zone out. Do what you need to take care of yourself.

## **Values Activity (15 mins)**

### **Goals**

- To discuss what values are and where they come from.
- To demonstrate how values can differ between individuals and can change over time.
- To examine how values influence our decisions and affect our perceptions when it comes to sexuality.
- To show how people and places may have contradictory values.
- To emphasize that no one should impose their values on another person.

### **Have Ready**

- 'Values' statements.

### **Activity Introduction**

- Ask youth, **"What is a value?"** A value is what is right or wrong for you, or what you believe in.
- Explain that everyone is going to pick three spots in the room to stand and move between. Spots can be one step over, or across the room. One spot represents 'Agree', one spot represents 'Disagree' and the third spot represents 'Neutral'. Only they will know which spot is which.
- Explain that you will read a series of statements.
- After each statement, the youth should move to somewhere between 'Agree-Neutral-Disagree' that they feel most accurately reflects their feelings about that statement. Explain that the 'Neutral' area includes not being sure what their feelings are, if they don't understand a statement, if they have never thought about their position on that particular statement, and/or if they do not want the rest of the group to know their position. *Note: This*

activity can be adjusted to the physical needs of the group, such as sitting and using thumbs up, down, and sideways.

- **Remind participants that this is a silent activity. This is important in maintaining a safer space where people feel comfortable participating.** This activity works best when people feel comfortable and respectfully express what they think. Aim for no talking, pointing, or laughing during the activity. Let youth know they will have a chance to share **after** the activity.

## Values Statements

- In brackets after each statement are how Teen Talk would answer the statements based on our operating principles. (See the Introductory Chapter of the Teen Talk Service Provider Manual for Teen Talk's Operating Principles.)
  - Suggested talking points for each statement are listed following the debrief and can be used in closing the exercise.
1. I believe that the media (Netflix, TV, movies, music, games, social media, etc.) accurately shows real life. (disagree)
  2. I believe that masturbation (touching yourself for sexual pleasure) is okay. (agree)
  3. I believe I have a responsibility to get tested for STIs if I am sexually active. (agree)
  4. I would feel comfortable starting a relationship or having sex with a person of a different culture or ethnic background. (agree)
  5. I believe that sex should be saved for marriage or for someone you love. (neutral)
  6. I believe it is okay to have sex without being in a dating relationship. (neutral)
  7. I am willing to speak out against transphobia and homophobia when I know it is happening. (agree)
  8. I believe watching porn is okay. (neutral)
  9. I believe women should be able to wear whatever clothes they want without being harassed. (Agree)
  10. I believe that if a man shows emotions, it is a sign of weakness. (Disagree)
  11. I believe that it is important to get consent before kissing someone. (Agree)

-Or-

I believe that unless someone says *No* or *Stop*, it's ok to keep touching them or having sex without talking about it. (Disagree)

12. I am willing to support a friend who is having an abortion. (agree)
13. I am willing to support a pregnant friend who is interested in adoption. (agree)
14. I believe teens can be good parents. (agree)
15. I know best if or when I am ready for sex. (agree)
16. I am confident I treat other people well, even when I disagree with them. (neutral)

## Debrief

- Ask youth, **“What did you think of the exercise?” “Have you thought about these issues before?” “Did you learn anything new about the group?”**
- **“Where do our values come from?”** Make a list of their responses; common ones include family, the Land, spirituality, religion, culture, self, media, friends, peers, school, past experiences, etc. We get different messages from different sources, and this can be confusing. Encourage youth to check in with how they personally feel and let them know they get to decide what fits best for them.
- It is important to think about our values because they influence the decisions we make, what we do, and how we take care of ourselves.
- **Values can change.** A part of maturing means finding your own values. This is often a process of mixing and matching the values of your family, culture, or religion with the values of your friends, the media, or your peer group with your own. Experiences can also impact values. Society's values change over time. Fifty years ago, it was less common for people of different ethnic backgrounds to date or get married. Ten years ago, the room may have looked different when we talked about dating someone of the same gender. Societies and personal values are shifting.

- Remind the youth that each of us is allowed to have different ideas. **“Your values are entirely your business and you do not have to share them with others, especially if you feel unsafe.”**
- **“No matter what our values are, no one ever has the right to insult, harass, or physically hurt someone else because of what they believe. Making others feel unsafe is called harassment, and we all have the right to feel safe.”**

## **Suggested Talking Points for Values Statements**

- Not all will need debriefing, but based on how the youth respond, you may want to address specific statements (e.g., homophobic or sexist values can be used as ‘teachable moments’).

**I believe that the media (Netflix, TV, movies, music, games, social media, etc.) accurately shows real life.**

The media often shows unrealistic expectations of how people should look and act. Often the relationships we see presented in the media are unhealthy. Media underrepresents many people and may only show them as a stereotype. We all need to be critical of what we see in the media, and challenge what it presents to us as ‘normal.’

**I believe that masturbation (touching yourself for sexual pleasure) is okay.**

Masturbation can be a safe and healthy part of someone’s sexuality. Exploring our bodies can also be a good way to get to know yourself and what you like and don’t like. Some people choose to masturbate, while others do not. We get to choose what is right for our bodies.

**I believe I have a responsibility to get tested for STIs if I am sexually active.**

Testing is an important part of taking care of our sexual health. If someone is sexually active, it’s recommended to test every 6 months or with each new partner. Testing is completely confidential and free. Places like teen clinics are great because they do test, have free protection supplies like condoms, and will answer any questions you might have.

**I would feel comfortable starting a relationship or having sex with a person of a different culture or ethnic background.**

People have a right to love, date, marry, or be attracted to whomever they choose. Have opinions/values changed over time/throughout history? Yes. At one point in history, interracial marriage was heavily discouraged, and the Canadian government used different policies to 'regulate' interracial marriage (e.g., Indian Act), and it was even illegal in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

(Note: If it comes up, address that sex trade workers do not deserve sexual assault. Sex trade workers have the right to decide whom they want to have sex with and when. It is never okay to force someone to have sex when they don't want to.)

Things to say to people negatively commenting on other peoples' attire include, "Well, they have a right to wear that. I'm glad I have the same right." "What you're saying sounds really judgmental."

**I believe it is okay to have sex without being in a dating relationship.**

For some, sex is an intimate/special activity they would share with someone special to them. For others, sex may be more casual or not tied to marriage. It is okay if casual sex is not for you, as values differ among everyone, but neither is 'wrong or right,' just personal decisions.

**I am willing to speak up against someone being put down for who they are.**

Sometimes we hear or see things that go against people's rights. It's important to think of safety first and speak out against discrimination when it won't bring more harm to the person or people experiencing it. If we see or hear discrimination happening, it's important to do something about it. Sometimes it's as simple as saying something like "that's not okay" or naming the discrimination. Other times, it means bringing extra support into the situation. For example, most schools have policies in place to protect students from discrimination like transphobia and homophobia, so telling a teacher or guidance counsellor or going up the school chain to the principal or superintendent might be needed. Most

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<sup>4</sup> Thompson, D. (2009). Racial ideas and gendered intimacies: The regulation of interracial relationships in North America. *Social & Legal Studies*, 18(3), 353–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663909339087>

workplaces also have policies in place and their own management or human resources and levels of authority we can file complaints with.

**I am willing to speak out against transphobia and homophobia when I know it is happening.**

Sometimes we hear or see things that go against people's rights. It's important to think of safety first and speak out against discrimination when it won't bring more harm to the person or people experiencing it. Gender identities and sexual orientations are incredibly diverse, and no one has the right to hurt or put anyone down because of who they know they are or how we express ourselves. If we see or hear this happening, it's important to do something about it. Sometimes it's as simple as saying something like "that's not okay" or naming the discrimination. Other times, it means bringing extra support into the situation. For example, most schools have policies in place to protect students from transphobia and homophobia, so telling a teacher or guidance counsellor or going up the school chain to the principal or superintendent might be needed. Most workplaces also have policies in place and their own management or human resources and levels of authority we can file complaints with.

**I believe watching porn is okay.**

Porn can help people explore their sexuality. Simply watching porn will not cause an STI or pregnancy, so it is a safer activity. Problems arise when people try to learn from porn and think that what they see is how sex should be in real life. It's important to remember when watching porn that it is made for entertainment and meant to please an audience, not the people in it. They cast actors with certain types of bodies, then put them into makeup fixed up by stylists. Lighting, scenery, sound, and camera people are directed for the best shot and many positions don't feel good in real life. There is lots of editing that goes into it and even in homemade or amateur porn, it is very staged and often fake. Plus, porn is often exploitive of the people in it, so being thoughtful about where we get it from and who is making money from it is important.

**I believe women should be able to wear whatever clothes they want without being harassed. (Agree)**

Sometimes our society excuses or justifies violence based on what



someone was wearing, where they were, who they were with, etc. This is called victim-blaming. In reality, no one ever does anything, says anything or wears anything to deserve to be harassed or sexually assaulted.

**I believe that if a man shows emotions, it is a sign of weakness.**  
(Disagree)

In North America, boys tend to be raised with the idea that showing any emotion except anger is a sign of weakness. In the next session, we'll talk about how showing and expressing emotion is a healthy way to cope with life's ups and downs. If we don't let emotions out, they can build up and eventually hurt us or the people around us.

**I believe that it is important to get consent before kissing someone.** (Agree)

-Or-

**I believe that unless someone says *No* or *Stop*, it's ok to keep touching them or having sex without talking about it.** (Disagree)

Consent is getting clear permission, and only yes means yes. It's a voluntary agreement, which means it's not something that one person does to another, but rather it's something that people decide to do together.

**I am willing to support a friend who is having an abortion.**

Believing someone who is pregnant has the right to choose what happens with a pregnancy in their body is called being pro-choice. Being pro-choice means that we support people who are pregnant in whatever decision they make, even if it is different from what we would choose. Ways to be supportive are keeping confidentiality, listening to them, going with them to appointments, understanding their experience is different from yours (i.e., this is not the time to share your values, stories, or experiences with pregnancy options), believing that they are making the right choice for themselves, respecting their decision, asking them what they need, and following through if you are able.

**I am willing to support a pregnant friend who is interested in adoption.**

It can be nerve-racking to ask for information that is important to us. We have a right to health information and info on pregnancy options. In Manitoba, a teen clinic is a good place to start to ask questions and find support about any pregnancy options, including adoption. Child and Family Services (CFS) and Adoption Options are the agencies that deal with adoptions in Manitoba. Because many people have negative experiences with CFS, having supportive people with you and taking notes on what is said when meeting with a CFS worker are good ideas. Finding, asking for, and receiving information from reliable sources are skills we can work on.

**I believe teens can be good parents.**

Many teen parents are discriminated against or are stigmatized. What do babies/children need? Love, food, shelter, etc. Can teens provide these things? Yes. Teen parents may need extra resources to help them be great parents, whether community resources outside the home or from friends and extended family. If someone is not prepared to have a child or deal with an unplanned pregnancy, it's important to be using birth control (such as condoms and/or hormonal birth control) or abstinence.

**I know best if or when I am ready for sex.**

Every person knows themselves best and can choose if/when the time is 'right' for them. What does 'ready' mean? Having the communication skills to talk about birth control and STI prevention, being able to communicate your expectations of how sex will change/not change your relationship with that person, making sure you and your partner get tested for STIs, having birth control and an STI prevention plan in place, feeling comfortable communicating boundaries, etc. are all things that might help you decide if you're ready for sex. Also, some people might not be interested in sex ever. The point is, we each know best for ourselves and there are many things to consider.

**I am confident that I treat other people well, even when I disagree with them.**

The good thing about our values is we each get to figure out our own. Because we are deserving of respect and the ability to believe in what we want, we also must respect others' rights to their values and what they believe in. There are healthy ways to disagree with

each other without hurting or putting each other down. This can make for interesting discussions and can lead to learning from each other. If we are unable to treat people well for what they believe in, we need to leave the situation, so we don't hurt anyone.

## **Wrap Up**

Things like our sexuality and values can play a big role in our relationships. Thinking about these things can help us understand what is important for us, and what we need to build or work on to have healthy relationships. Over the next few sessions, we will talk more in-depth about a lot of things we touched on today, like consent, communication and how our ideas about how masculinity can be positive and healthy in relationships.

## **Check-out (10 mins)**

- Have youth each share something they're looking forward to this week.
- Hand out daily evaluation forms for the youth to fill out.
- Give a 'heads up' about the next session's topic (Self-Esteem, Body Image and Masculinity).

## **Session 2: Self-Esteem, Body Image and Masculinity (65 mins)**

### **Goals**

- Understand the factors that affect youth self-esteem and body image.
- Reflect on the impact of harmful messaging about masculinity on healthy sexuality and self-esteem.
- Explore healthy masculinity.

### **Have Ready**

- Put Group Agreement on the wall (from session 1)
- Paper and pens for each person
- Colouring sheets and markers/pencil crayons
- Whiteboard or flipcharts
- Basket for Slam Dunk activity
- “5 steps to building self-esteem” flip chart/ slides with headings written out
- Five “slam dunk” statements flip chart/ slides

### **Check-in (7 mins)**

#### **Instructions**

- Hand out a sheet of blank paper and a pen to everyone.
- Invite youth to draw how they are feeling today.
- After the drawing is complete, ask each person to share their name and explain their drawing.
- The facilitator should also draw and participate in the sharing.

### **Workshop Introduction (3 mins)**

#### **Instructions**

- Introduce the topics for this session.
- Remind the group that this session will follow the same group agreement made in session one. Ask if anyone wants to add anything or has any questions about the agreement.

## Slam Dunk Activity\* (10 mins)

### Goals

- To explore elements of self-esteem.
- To practice positive self-talk and recognize positive self-reflection.

### Have Ready

- Write the '5 Steps to Building Self-Esteem' on the board or reveal the flipchart with the steps written on it (just the bolded parts). Briefly go through each step, using the information below each bullet.

### Instructions

- Choose five Slam Dunk statements and write them on the board or reveal a flipchart with them on it.
- Hand out a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each youth.
- Ask youth to choose at least one question and write their answer on the blank sheet of paper.
- Once everyone has finished, ask youth to take turns sharing their answers (but remind them that sharing is voluntary). After each participant has read their answer, invite them to crumple up their sheet of paper and slam dunk it into the container or basket (or bag, if nothing else).

### Sample Flipchart

#### **Five Steps to Building Self-Esteem**

These are some steps that can help build self-esteem:

- **Value yourself and value others**  
Identify the qualities you like about yourself and remind yourself of them often. Learn to forgive yourself for mistakes you have made in the past. Communicate your feelings and thoughts honestly and directly. When you appreciate your own worth, it is easier to respect the worth of others. Accept other people for who they are. Try not to control someone else.

- **Get connected**

We all need extra support. Connecting is about both caring and feeling cared for. Look at the people, places, or things around you that mean something to you and find positive examples of mutual and supportive relationships. This can include friends, family, and counsellors. When you are alone, use the time to enjoy yourself rather than just existing until you can be with others.

- **Think about your thinking**

Be aware of your thoughts and your negative self-talk such as blaming, criticizing, or comparing. Notice if there are patterns to when these thoughts come up. Challenge your negative thoughts when they happen. Remind yourself of your strengths instead. This takes practice. Be kind to yourself, don't expect perfection.

- **Live in the moment**

When you are feeling stressed, ask yourself, "Am I okay at this very moment, this very second?" Even in the most difficult times, we are usually okay second by second – it's when we let ourselves get caught up in the past or the future that we tend to feel overwhelmed. Understand that "this too shall pass."

- **Be active**

Move your body in ways that feel good. Studies show that when people get out and do things, especially something physically oriented, they feel better (especially the next day). So, find something that you like that feels good for your body and do it!

## **Slam Dunk Statements**

(Select 5 for youth to choose from)

- Something I do better than most people
- A skill or ability I would like to improve or work on
- A time that I handled a conflict in a positive way
- A time I turned a setback into a triumph (success)
- Something that I am proud of
- Three of my best qualities
- An important relationship in my life and why
- For me, the key to feeling good about myself is...
- Something I am really good at is...
- A promise I made to myself and have kept
- A talent I would like to develop this year
- What I would like to have written on my tombstone

- Something that I want to be complimented on
- An important achievement in my life
- Ways that I show respect for myself
- The most difficult thing I have accomplished
- Things I do for self-care
- An important life lesson I have learned and why
- What I would try if I knew I could not fail
- What I would regret not having done if my life were ending
- The best thing I have ever done for myself
- The best thing I have ever done for another person

## Body Image and Media (10 mins)

### Goals

- To explore body image issues.
- To explore how youth are affected by body image issues.
- To discuss the media's role in creating and perpetuating negative body image.

### Have Ready

- Hand out scrap pieces of paper to each participant.
- Recycling bin.

### Instructions

- Ask youth, **"What is body image?"** How you see yourself, not what you actually look like.
- Give youth a few minutes to reflect on all the things that go into images of celebrities that we see in the media. Tell them to take a moment to think of a celebrity picture they've recently seen. Now, on the paper, write down all the things that went into making this photo. Think about what was done to the person in the photo, and what was done behind the camera to make the picture look that way.
- Ask youth, **"What does the person in the photo do to look this way?"** (Flipchart responses) Photoshop, personal trainer, personal stylist, makeup, plastic surgery, etc.

- Ask youth, **“What has been done to the photo to make it look this way?”** (Flipchart responses) Expensive camera, lighting, photo editing, professional photographer, etc.
- Ask youth, **“Is it easy to remember all the things that were done when we look at the photo?”** Not really. Looking at these photos may lead to feeling pressured to look a certain way and create an idea that there’s such a thing as a ‘perfect’ body. But these images are not realistic. What’s going on in these photos takes a lot of money, special equipment, and a team of people to end up looking the way it does. **Try to be critical of these photos and remind yourself, and others, that these photos are not what we are meant to look like. Many photos are trying to sell an image or product to make a profit by encouraging us to change our natural beauty.**
- Remind youth that media is supposed to be entertainment, not real life, and social media is supposed to be a tool for connecting with friends and having fun. If you’re following something that doesn’t promote your overall health, wellbeing, or creativity, then unfollow it.<sup>5</sup> Replace them with people and stories that make you feel good about yourself and others. Note: Place the bin in the middle of the room.
- Now, we want you to do one last thing with your list. Crumple up that piece of paper and throw it away!

## **Pornography and Sexism (10 mins)**

### **Goals**

- Explore unhealthy messages about sexuality in pornography.

### **Instructions**

- Discuss the debrief with the group

### **Debrief**

Pornography is media that is made for entertainment. **“Pornography does not show us respectful sexual relationships, especially when men and**

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<sup>5</sup>WOWPresents. (2016, September 12). UNHhhh Ep 22: “Social Media” w/ Trixie Mattel & Katya Zamolodchikova. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eN9ce0EVD2o>



**women are having sex on screen. Porn is often made for and from the perspective of men.”** In porn, we often see:

- Guys getting sexual pleasure.
- Girls giving sexual pleasure (even when it’s two women having sex it’s usually for turning on heterosexual males).
- Women in submissive roles and treated violently.
- White, thin bodies as the default. People of colour or bodies that aren’t thin are treated as “exotic” and different instead of normal. These are examples of racism and fatphobia.

**Like all media, porn has been edited to look different from what’s really happening on the set.** One scene of pornography may have been filmed over several hours. This means it may include sex that may hurt in real life and show fake pleasure/orgasms. It also sends the message that sex = orgasm every time for everyone.

**In real life, we need to have conversations with partners about what would feel good for each person. It’s important to talk about things like condoms or birth control, and we always have to have consent.**

Porn can be a healthy part of someone’s sexuality, but it can help to be a critical user and remember that it is entertainment, not education. It might help to ask yourself:

- “How does this portray women?”
- “How does this portray men?”
- “How do I feel after watching it?”

## **Gender Roles and Redefining Masculinity (15 mins)**

### **Goals**

- To discuss gender roles and stereotypes.
- Identify aspects of toxic masculinity.
- Explore media that model healthy masculinity.
- To illustrate how gender stereotypes can lead to unhealthy relationships and contribute to violence against women, girls, and non-binary people.
- To challenge the limitations and discrimination created by gender scripts.

## Have Ready

- Prepare “The Mask you Live In” trailer  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc45-ptHMxo> . Warning: it has coarse language.
- Prepare the Jay-Z interview clip  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h78w9Uza1rs>

It might help to watch it twice as it’s short and fast.

## Instructions

- Let’s check out this short trailer for a film called “The Mask You Live In”. It’s a documentary about masculinity in North America. Just a heads up, it has some swears and harsh language.
- Show video trailer.

## Trailer Debrief

- Write responses on flipchart
- **“As men, how are we expected to be and act in the world? What are the messages we get?”**
- Additional probing questions you may use:
  - What do we see in the movies, TV and music videos?
  - What does it mean to be “manly”?
  - What kind of job/career should we have?
  - How should we solve problems?
  - What kind of communicators are we supposed to be?

Examples of items the group’s Masculinity list may include:

- Be strong.
- Don’t cry.
- Don’t show emotions except to show anger (even when sad).
- Want sex all the time.
- Be aggressive.
- Do a physical job, be the boss.
- Be rich/ successful.
- Persona: baller/gangster.

- **If men act outside of this list of expectations, we can often be called names or harassed. “For example, if a man does show his emotions, what does he sometimes get called?”** (“Fag,” wuss...)
- We know that someone being called a “fag” is an example of homophobia. This is a perfect example of how all guys are negatively affected by homophobia, even heterosexual men. Homophobia can be incredibly harmful, especially when people are made to feel unsafe by bullying or harassment.
- We all have a right to attend school or work safely and free of harassment. If we are experiencing bullying or see it happening to someone else, we need to reach out to an adult that we trust for support. (Note: If “pussy” comes up, talk about how using a term for female genitalia as an insult is another form of gender violence.)
- **“Where do we get these messages from?”** TV/movies, music videos, magazines, internet, billboards, own experiences with friends and family. If we see violent behaviour growing up in our family, we may think it is normal or okay to use violence to control the people in our lives.
- **“How do these expectations affect us as guys, and our relationships, in a negative way?”** (Use “Masculinity” flipchart/list for probing.)
  - I can’t talk about feelings or show “weakness”
  - Partner is afraid of me
  - Chance of committing sexual assault or rape
  - Not doing what I want in life for fear of being made fun of
  - Feeling pressured to be sexually active
  - Jealousy and anger
- Gender roles/stereotypes don’t help us meet our needs because they limit us to playing a role instead of being who we really are. People are even punished by society for acting outside of a gender role. The roles represent only an extreme of gender when in reality someone could be anywhere in between or not identify at all with the stereotypes.
- **Since we know the negative impacts on our relationships, let’s redefine what it is to be a man and talk about characteristics that can help create healthy relationships.** Let’s watch a quick video to help us explore this idea. It’s an interview with Hip Hop artist JAY-Z about a song he wrote about being a father to his daughter Blue.
- **Show Jay Z Video**

## Video Debrief

- **“What did you think of that clip? What qualities of being a man was he showing? Are there any stereotypes from before that we can make positive?”** (Flipchart responses)
  - Strong (in character, able to do what he feels is right even if it’s difficult)
  - Confident (without putting others down)
  - Admits it when wrong or doesn’t know what to do
  - Shows emotions
  - Respects women
  - Caring
  - Good communicator
- **When we make a new definition of masculinity or refuse to act out gender roles, each one of us gains the power to communicate and navigate our relationships with respect and dignity.**
- **Is this easy?** No, it might take work and practice. And the reality is, sometimes we get our way more often when we act tough, but what is lacking is honest connections with people and healthy, long-lasting relationships built on respect and trust.

## **Check-out (10 mins)**

### **Instructions**

- Have youth each share the most important thing they learned today.
- Hand out daily evaluation form and give a heads up about the next session’s topic (Mental Wellness).
- Answer any questions from evaluation forms if time.

## **Session 3: Mental Wellness (60 mins)**

### **Goals**

- Explore the roots of complicated emotions, anger and stress.
- Identify ways to cope with stress and anger, encouraging healthy coping strategies.

### **Have Ready**

- Paper and pens for each person
- Colouring sheets and markers/pencil crayons
- Whiteboard or flipcharts
- Bring stress balls, tactile toys, fidget things, etc.
- Balls for Wellness Ball game (2-4 tennis balls, 2 beach balls and 1 special ball)
- Flip chart pages and markers for small group brainstorm

### **Check-in (go around) (5 mins)**

#### **Instructions**

- Invite youth to share something that gives them inner strength.

### **Workshop Introduction (3 mins)**

#### **Instructions**

- Introduce the topics for this session.
- Remind the group that this session will follow the same group agreement made in session one.

### **Mental Health and Wellness (2 mins)**

#### **Instructions**

- Discuss the debrief with the group

### **Debrief**

**We all have mental health, and, just like our physical health, we have to work towards mental wellness.**

**“What do you think I mean by mental wellness?”** It’s an ability to deal with stresses and challenges while living a full and creative life. Like physical health, we know that mental health can change throughout our lives.

**We talk about mental health with people your age because stress is common during the teenage years, and we all have to learn how to cope with stress and difficult feelings to be mentally well.**

## **Mental Wellness Ball Game (10 mins)**

### **Goal**

- To demonstrate the importance of self-care, boundaries, and setting limits when they are supporting others.

### **Have Ready**

- 3 or 4 similar small balls (depending on the size of the group), 2 larger beachballs or volleyballs, and one special ball that looks different from all the others.

### **Instructions**

- Ask youth to stand in a circle, in a clear area.
- The activity facilitator has 3 or 4 similar small balls (depending on the size of the group), 2 larger beachballs or volleyballs, and one special ball near them.
- Tell youth, **“Raise one hand, and leave that hand up until you have been passed a ball. Remember who throws you the ball, and who you throw the ball to. Throw softly and remember this isn’t a race.”**
- Once youth have the hang of the activity, add another small ball and have youth “go through the same pattern with this ball.”
- When all 3 or 4 small balls are in rotation, add a large ball, which will start at the facilitator and move around the circle, passed side to side.
- After a couple of rotations of that large ball, add the other large ball, going side to side in the other direction. You may need to ask

youth to slow down or concentrate on the activity if balls are flying or dropping often.

- After a couple more rotations of all those balls, pause the game and explain, **“The last ball is the most important ball, the one that cannot be dropped, this ball will follow the same rotation as the other small balls. OK, now GO!”**
- After a couple more minutes, end the activity and ask youth to sit down where they are standing to debrief.

## Debrief

- **“What did you think of the activity?”**
- **“What did it remind you of?”** (Stress, life, anxiety.)
- **“What did the little balls represent?”** (Everyday stressors.)
- **“The bigger balls?”** (Events that happen that you can’t foresee, like death in the family, breakups, etc.)
- **“The special ball you weren’t allowed to drop?”** (You, the most important and special thing there is.)
- **“What helped you catch the most balls, and not drop everything?”** (Help from others, cooperation, saying “STOP!” or using people’s names before you threw it, etc.)
- This game can represent our lives, how we can support ourselves and each other, and how sometimes we need to drop some parts of our lives to take care of ourselves. (It could be saying no to babysitting, skipping a party, turning off our phone, going to bed early, etc.) **“We need to have limits and boundaries. We might not be able to stop stressful things we are not prepared for from happening, but we can ask for help when we need it. It is important to take care of ourselves to be great supports, friends, or partners.”**

## Stress (3 mins)

### Instructions

- Discuss the debrief with the group

## Debrief

Next, we want to talk about stress. **Stress is not a mental illness; stress is a normal response to feeling worried about something.**

**“What are some things or situations that make people feel stressed?”**

School, parents/family, relationships, friends, peers, money, work, etc.

**“Can positive situations be stressful too?”** Yes. For example, starting a new relationship, graduating, getting a job and having more independence can be stressful even though they may be things you want to happen.

(Note: Use examples that are relevant to the group.)

**In fact, some level of stress is good for us: it can actually be motivating (also called eustress or positive stress).** But, if people get stressed out and don't know how to deal with it, stress can negatively impact our mental and physical health.<sup>6</sup> It is possible for someone to have no evidence of mental illness but have poor mental health because they are dealing with really high-stress levels in their lives and/or have not yet figured out helpful ways to cope or feel calm.

**“How do people know when they are stressed? How might our body let us know it is too much?”** Muscle tension, loss of concentration (restlessness), pain (headaches or backaches), increased heart rate, sweating, indigestion, changes in feelings (such as anger or sadness), changes in eating (more or less than usual), social withdrawal (wanting to be alone), anxiety, colds/flu, changes in sleeping (insomnia or sleeping too much), etc.<sup>7</sup>

**One reason many people your age feel stressed is that it might feel like there is a lot of pressure in your lives. If you feel like you are taking on too much, it's okay to take a break from things. When trying to reduce stress, it can help to take some time for ourselves and find someone to talk to about it.**

## Coping Bingo and Stress Reduction (7 mins)

### Goals

- To identify existing coping techniques in the room.

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<sup>6</sup> Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre. (n.d.-b). Stress Hacks. <https://stresshacks.ca/>

<sup>7</sup> FHI 360. (2005). Youth peer education toolkit: Training of trainers manual (pp. 1–204). United Nations Population Fund and Youth Peer Education Network. <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/Youth%20Peer%20Education%20Toolkit%20-%20The%20Training%20of%20Trainers%20Manual.pdf>



- To build a connection between hobbies, art, sports, etc. for coping and mental wellness.

## Have Ready

- Bingo cards (See Appendix A).

## Instructions

- Hand out bingo cards.
- Explain that everyone will move around the room and find people who do the things listed in the squares.
- Get them to sign their name in the square if it applies to them.
- You can only get someone to sign your sheet once.
- Once you have a full (line, 2 lines, etc.), yell 'BINGO.'

## Debrief

- **Hobbies, sports, art, and connection to friends, family, and community are all part of caring for our mental health.**
- **The activities on these cards build up our confidence, connect us to our cultures, and our communities.** Some of these things bring us laughter or a needed distraction. Other things on these cards offer a chance for connection or to reflect on what is going on. These are all things that strengthen our mental health and help protect us during life's challenging moments.
- Ideally, we do both reflective and engaging activities, as well as distancing or distracting activities, when dealing with difficult or stressful times. We don't only want to reflect on our hard times because that can be exhausting, but if we only distract from our problems, then we may not work through our feelings. This is why we need both.
- **As long as there have been people, we have had ways of dealing with stress and hard times.** All cultures have activities and ceremonies that promote mental health and deal with stress. One Indigenous cultural and spiritual tradition that is from this land is smudging. Smudging includes burning Medicines like Sage, Cedar and Sweet Grass to cleanse and heal. Smudging can be used to help someone de-stress, get through a hard time or maintain mental wellness. People may also smudge to connect to their

spirituality. Smudging can also be part of reclaiming indigenous identity, culture, and power.

## Big Emotions\* (10 mins)

\*This section was adapted from *Man to Man: A Tool-kit for Delivering Workshops to Men and Boys about Reducing Sexual Assault*, [http://www.ncdsv.org/images/FSACC\\_Man-to-Man-English\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/FSACC_Man-to-Man-English_2009.pdf)

## Goals

- Reflect on identifying the emotional roots of anger.

## Have Ready

- Flip chart with a drawn image of a tree with roots and branches, and a marker.
- You may also cut out paper leaves and bring markers and tape (optional).

## Instructions

- (Note: You may choose to do this as a self-reflection activity with leaves or as a group discussion using the debrief talking points. Allow for more time if using leaves)
- Hand out paper leaves, pens, and tape.
- Have participants each write down on a paper leaf, a body cue that they experience when getting angry, and then tape them to the branches.
- Review them as a group.

## Debrief

- **Anger is a normal human emotion.** It can be caused by anything from a friend's annoying behaviour to worries about personal problems or memories of a troubling or traumatic life event.
- **Have you heard of the word trauma or traumatic before?**  
**Trauma is a person's experience of an unexpected event that they were unprepared for and have no control over.** Trauma can be witnessed, experienced, or can include historical events and intergenerational hurts, which means people may still be affected by

the hurtful things that happened in their family or to their family members. Someone who has experienced trauma might feel really stressed, angry or overwhelmed for a long time, as trauma can make it hard for people to cope with changes, or their thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, this leads to us abusing or hurting the people close to us. But of course, not everyone who experiences trauma abuses others.

- (FYI: Anger is often the most frequent trigger for dating violence for youth. Wanting to gain control (for boys) and acting in self-defence (for girls) is also common.<sup>8</sup>)
- (FYI: Trauma is often the underlying cause of many pressing problems in our communities including but not limited to poverty, crime, violence, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, low academic achievement, mental health problems and addiction. It is estimated that within the general population 1 in 4 Canadians has experienced a traumatic event, and 1 in 10 experiences post-traumatic stress.<sup>9</sup>)
- **Anger is often related to other emotions.** We might first feel afraid, attacked, offended, disrespected, forced, trapped, or pressured. If any of these feelings are intense enough, we think of the emotion as anger. A lot of the time, as guys we feel like the only emotion we can show is anger.
- Gender stereotypes such as “toughen up”, “take it like a man” and “boys don’t cry” can give us the idea that expressing vulnerable and tender emotions equals weakness.
- (FYI: One reason why so many men end up being abusive to women, be it sexually, physically or emotionally, is not only because they don’t have access to their feelings, it’s also because they bought into the idea that being a man means being in control of other people—your wife, your girlfriend or other women.<sup>10</sup>)
- **If not addressed positively, anger can lead to violence and hurting ourselves or the people around us. On the other hand,**

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<sup>8</sup> Ball, B., & Rosenbluth, B. (2008). Expect respect: A school-based program for preventing teen dating violence and promoting safe and healthy relationship (p. 17).

<sup>9</sup> Klinik Community Health. (2012). The Manitoba trauma information and education centre (MTIEC). In Klinik. <https://klinik.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Klinik-MTIEC-Brochure.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre. (2009). Man to man: A tool-kit for delivering workshops to men and boys about reducing sexual assault. In Liberty Lane (pp. 1–647). Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, Inc. [https://www.libertylane.ca/uploads/1/6/1/7/16174606/man\\_to\\_man\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.libertylane.ca/uploads/1/6/1/7/16174606/man_to_man_toolkit.pdf)

**when handled positively, anger can help us stand up for ourselves and others and fight injustices.**

- Perhaps the most helpful thing to remember about anger is that it is a secondary emotion. A primary feeling is what is felt immediately before we feel angry. We always feel something else first before we get angry.
- To illustrate this, let's look at a picture of a tree. Above the ground, there is the part of the tree that shows. This represents anger. Most of the tree is actually underground as roots. This hidden part represents the other emotions linked to anger.
- **"What would be some examples of emotions connected to anger?"** These could be fear, hurt, embarrassment, sadness etc. (Note: Write the responses around the roots of the tree.)
- It can be helpful to know what our body cues are with anger so that we can deal with our emotion before it turns into violence. **"What do you notice with your body or mind when you are angry or getting angry?"** Some people notice feeling hot or flushed, clenched fists or jaw, shaking, can't think clearly, etc.
- If we can notice and pay attention to these signs with our bodies, we have an opportunity to deal with the emotion in a healthy way.

## **Coping with Anger or Hard Times (10 mins)**

### **Goals**

- Brainstorm examples of coping.
- Show the difference between coping that heals and coping that numbs.
- Connect to community resources for youth.

### **Instructions**

- Split into two groups. Give each group a marker and a flip chart with "What Got You Through?" written on it.
- Allow groups about five minutes to complete the flip charts with things that helped them through hard times.
- Have each group read their list, debriefing as a large group after each list. If the lists are very similar, have each group rotate sharing two items, back and forth until all items have been shared from the lists. (This avoids the first reporting group from covering all the items and leaving nothing for the other group/s to say.)

## Debrief

**Anger and hard times are going to happen in our lives, so it makes sense to try to figure out healthy ways to cope.** These can take some time and work to develop but can really help in the end. **“When thinking about a hard time or a time when you felt really angry, what helped you get through?”**

(Note: The following are examples of things that may be on lists. Work with whatever the youth come up with, and make sure some resources are also listed.)

- **Talking to someone you trust:** a friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor
- Call a helpline:
  - Klinik Crisis Line: 204.786.8686 / 1.888.322.3019 (24/7)
  - Manitoba Suicide Line: 1.877.435.7170 (24/7)
  - Klinik Drop-in Counseling: 204.784.4067 or local counselling service
  - Youth Mobile Crisis Unit: 204.949.4777
  - Kids Help Phone: 1.800.668.6868
  - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Program Centralized Intake: 204.958.9600 (through referral by a teacher, counsellor, or yourself without a doctor's note, free)
  - Farm, Rural and Northern Stress Line: 1.866.367.3276
- Using activities we showed you earlier (bingo)
- Attend ceremonies
- Cultural practices
- Masturbate
- Spend time alone/get to know yourself
- Hang out with friends, call people you know
- Cry, laugh and get hugs
- Do something creative, draw, paint, or play music
- Write down your feelings in a letter, journal, blog, or diary
- Play sports, dance, sing, ride a bike
- Read poetry or create your own
- Prescription medication (if prescribed for you and taken in the recommended dose)

- (Note: If substance use or self-harm come up, discuss with the youth issues relating to harm reduction.)
- (FYI: Though Youth Mobile Crisis offers confidential phone calls, they will not visit youth in person without guardian's consent or if the youth is intoxicated. If the youth is high risk or is in the midst of it, then YMC will call the police to intervene.)

**Some ways of coping allow us to reflect and/or release our feelings** (e.g., talking, journaling, making music, art), **and others help us to distract, numb, or avoid feelings** (e.g., shopping, watching television, using substances, or self-harm which was talked about earlier). Ideally, we do reflective and engaging activities as well as distancing or distracting activities when dealing with difficult times.

**It's also important to make sure that whatever we are doing to cope makes us feel better and not angrier or worse.** You could think of it as a volume button, we want it to turn our volume down, not up. For example, punching a punching bag when you get angry with your partner might actually increase your anger. Instead, you might try going for a quick run or something else that makes you feel less angry afterwards.

**Substance use or self-medicating is a choice some people make.** It may be helpful in the short term to avoid challenging feelings but can sometimes lead to problems in the long run or to addictions. **It's important to know that substances and self-medicating numb all feelings, both "negative" (e.g., shame, guilt) and "positive" (e.g., joy, hope).**

It can be scary talking to friends, counsellors, or crisis lines about issues that are going on in our lives, but it can be helpful. People on the Klinik Crisis Line or Manitoba Suicide Line are counsellors who are trained to offer support and help. They understand that calling and sharing is a hard thing to do. They will wait with the person, and they won't hang up if the person is silent or crying.

**The services listed are free, mostly youth-friendly and try to be non-judgmental. If you try one of these places or come across a person you don't find helpful, please try another one.** Sometimes we have to try a few different resources before we find one, we are comfortable with.

## **Check-out (10 mins)**

### **Instructions**

- Have youth each share something they are going to do this week for self-care. **Remind them that in Session 2, you talked about self-esteem and that everyone is worth care. Doing things to help yourself feel good is important.**
- Hand out daily evaluation form and give a heads up about the next session's topic (Communication, Consent and Dating Relationships).
- Answer any questions from evaluation forms if time.

## **Session 4: Communication, Consent and Dating Relationships (70 mins)**

### **Goals**

- Understand healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships.
- Explore the role of assertive communication in relationships.
- Explore what it takes to build a healthy relationship.
- Understand sexual consent.

### **Have Ready**

- Paper and pens for each person
- Colouring sheets and markers/pencil crayons
- Whiteboard or flipcharts
- Bring stress balls, tactile toys, fidget things, etc.
- Choose at least six “Relationships Spectrum Activity” cards (print and cut out [and laminate if wanted]. See the end of this section)

### **Check-in (go around) (3 mins)**

- Invite youth to share what their dream date activity would be.

### **Workshop Introduction (2 mins)**

#### **Instructions**

- Introduce the topics for this session.
- Remind the group that this session will follow the same group agreement made in session one.

Today we want to talk about relationships. We know there can be all kinds of relationships: friendships, family relationships, but today we are going to be focusing on dating relationships.

**I am not making any assumptions about the people in this room.** I am not assuming that you are into dating girls, guys, both or neither. I am not assuming that anyone has been in an abusive dating relationship or that people are even thinking about dating, but we know that abuse can exist in all kinds of dating relationships. We also know that you can't often tell by looking at people if they have been affected by abuse.



**Anyone can experience abuse, no matter their gender.** We are interested in having a discussion with you as guys as to how we can work together to eliminate violence against women. **“To be clear, we are not assuming that anyone in this circle has used abuse. But we are also not assuming that no one has.”** We do know that there is room for improvement for all of us in our relationships, and that’s what this workshop is all about. We want this to be an empowering and awesome experience, not a negative one.

**We know that everyone deserves to live in a world where they are respected and safe from violence. Sadly, this is not the case for many girls and women. We know all women deserve safety and respect. Those of us here can become part of the solution.** If we as guys decide to treat women with respect at all times, we can be a part of this world becoming safer for women, including the ones in our lives.

**“This is one of our heavier workshops, if you’re having a tough time with this topic it is okay to put your head down or “zone out.”** We will hand out a resource sheet with a list of numbers and places you can go if you need to talk about this topic further.

(Note: If you have an ongoing relationship with the youth and it would be appropriate, offer to check in with youth after the program time if they need to talk or be connected to resources.)

## **Three Types of Communication (5 mins)**

### **Goals**

- Discuss passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles and how they may impact relationships.
- Model the three styles

### **Instructions**

- Discuss the debrief with the group

### **Debrief**

**Communication is about the sending and receiving of messages to get our needs met but now we want to talk about different styles of communication.** Communication styles generally break down into passive, aggressive and assertive.

### **What is a passive style of communication?**

- Not asking for what they want or need
- Not stating how they feel
- Giving in to what others want
- Having a hard time speaking up when things bother them
- Apologizing a lot for no apparent reason
- Having a hard time standing up for self and others

**Does a passive communicator get their needs met?** Not usually. It can often be hard for a passive communicator to get their needs met because other people may have a hard time knowing what a passive communicator is feeling or what they want. **Communicating passively is different than being shy. A shy or introverted person can still communicate in different ways including assertively.**

### **What about aggressive communication?**

- Putting themselves first at expense of others
- Overpowering, intimidating, and/or threatening
- Bullying others
- Not listening to others
- Disrespecting other people's feelings, opinions etc.

**Does this person get their needs met?** Sometimes. An aggressive communicator may get what they want, but they often do so at the expense of other people. This will not create feelings of respect for anyone involved.

**Passive-aggressive communication is another form of communicating you may have heard of.** It's when someone uses passive language with an aggressive manner of speaking. Someone might deny there's a problem when they appear upset, react sarcastically, their facial expressions might not match their feelings (smiling when angry), or they may spread gossip. This type of communication can be confusing because of the mixed messages and may create resentment.

**Gaslighting is another example of passive-aggressive communication, where one person tries to control the other person through purposeful confusion.** This is a form of emotional abuse which is never ok. **If you've been in a relationship where someone's communication style is manipulative, controlling or scary know that it is not your fault and talk**

**to a trusted adult.** This could be a teacher, school counsellor, family member or a phone line like the Kids Help Phone.

**What about assertive communication?**

- Expressing their own needs/wants while respecting others
- Speaking up and listening too
- Can negotiate and make compromises
- Good 'team player'

**Will this type of communicator get their needs met?** Maybe. Assertive communicators don't always get what they want. However, they can state what they want or need and at the same time can respect others even if the answer is sometimes not what they were hoping for. We don't always see assertive communication modelled for us in the media or our daily lives, but this style is key to building healthy relationships.

**Let's use an example to see what these styles might look like in a real-life situation. Let's say someone was planning to go to a party on Saturday night and the person they were interested in was going to be there.**

**If someone was communicating passively, would they walk over and talk to their crush?** No, they would likely hang back and wait to see if the other person would come over. **Will a conversation happen?** Maybe but only if their crush comes over to talk to them. Passive communication doesn't necessarily lead to someone getting the attention of the person they are interested in, especially if the other person is communicating passively as well.

**What might this look like if the person was communicating aggressively?** They might interrupt who their crush is talking to and demand that person's attention. Someone who is behaving aggressively might even start touching someone without their permission. **Is any of this respectful?** No. We know that all people have the right to their personal space, and it is never okay to touch someone without their consent. An aggressive communicator may talk to their crush, but they likely won't be respected by their crush.

**What might this look like if the person was communicating assertively?** Someone could walk across the room and have a respectful conversation. (This includes respecting someone's physical space.) It could mean asking

them questions like, “How’s it going?” and then listening to the answer. Someone could even listen in on an ongoing group conversation and start to participate. **Will assertive communication help someone get to know their crush?** Maybe, maybe not, but we know their crush will feel like they were respected.

**Which gender is often taught to communicate passively? Girls and women.** The messages we get often tell us that girls and women must be polite and should put others before themselves. This does not promote healthy communication. **Which gender is often taught to communicate aggressively? Boys and men.** Often there is pressure for guys to not show their feelings, except anger and to act like they are always in charge. This is also unhelpful and limits healthy communication. These expectations are called gender roles or gender scripts and they are taught to us by media and society.

**Another gender role taught by society is that men shouldn’t listen to women the same way they listen to other men.** This can be so ingrained in our culture that they may not even realize they are doing it. **This is an example of sexism. We all have a responsibility to challenge sexism in our culture and ourselves.** It is important to be aware of how you talk and listen to the people around you. **Assertive listening is just as important as assertive talking.** Pay attention to if you are ever cutting people off, talking over them, excluding them from conversations.

**Assertive communication is respecting the feelings of others while still respecting yourself and how you feel.** Being assertive is expected in a lot of places in our society, it’s what a lot of schools teach and what employers often look for in job interviews and at work. **Most importantly assertive communication helps build healthy relationships.**

**People use different communication styles with different people.** We might communicate differently with our friends than we do with our family. Sometimes we need to use our best judgment in choosing what type of communication style to use especially when safety is concerned or when we feel threatened.

**Communication is also shown differently across cultures.** For example, in some cultures communicating respectfully can mean putting other people’s voices before your own or not looking people in the eyes.

## Healthy, Unhealthy and Abusive Relationships (5 mins)

### Goals

- Explore why people date.
- Explore and define healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships.
- Demonstrate what a supportive relationship can look like.

### Instructions

- Discuss the debrief with the group

### Debrief

**“Why do people start dating in the first place?”** Want to have someone to hang out with (companionship), are attracted to them, like each other, etc.

**“What is good about relationships?”** Having fun, spending time with someone, having someone to trust, having support (someone who is there for you), affection, being respected, they are exciting, etc.

**Relationships are defined as healthy when they include things like equality, respect, assertive communication, trust and feeling accepted for who you are.**

**If things like trust or respect are missing then we would define that as an unhealthy relationship. On a more extreme end, if there is an element of fear or violence, we would call that an abusive relationship.**

We all have strengths, things that we like to do, or that make us feel good about ourselves. This could be a part-time job, sports, school, family, friends, music or art for example. In an unhealthy or abusive relationship, the partner using abuse tries to take away this strength by controlling their partner and making them feel bad which also breaks down their partner's self-esteem.

(Note: If time allows, ask youth to identify an example of strength. If not, use the following:) **If your part-time job was one of your strengths, because it made you feel good about yourself, independent, and gave you money to do other things -- an abusive partner might try to take that away by spreading rumours to get you fired, make you late for work,**

tell you your job is stupid, hurt you physically so you can't work, etc. **We want to be clear that abuse is a choice. This means that anytime someone is acting abusively they could also choose not to.**

**How would a supportive partner choose to act in a healthy relationship?** Be supportive by dropping you off or picking you up, respect you and your job choice by encouraging you, communicate openly and be caring by asking about your day. Even if your partner wasn't thrilled that you have a job or work so many hours, they would still choose to treat you with respect and be supportive of your choice to work.

## Relationship Spectrum Activity (10 mins)

### Goals

- To provide an opportunity to define, discuss, and identify the distinctions between healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationship scenarios.
- To highlight what a supportive relationship can look like.

### Have Ready

- Relationship scenario cards (see Appendix B).

### Activity Introduction

- Ask youth, **"Why do people start dating in the first place?"** Want to have someone to hang out with (companionship), are attracted to them, like each other, etc. **"What is good about relationships?"** Having fun, spending time with someone, having someone to trust, having support (someone who is there for you), affection, being respected, they are exciting, etc. **Relationships are defined as healthy when they include things like equality, respect, assertive communication, trust, and feeling accepted for who you are.**
- **If things like trust or respect are missing, then we would define that as an unhealthy relationship. On a more extreme end, if there is an element of fear or violence, we would call that an abusive relationship. Abuse is always a choice.**

- **Provide a disclaimer, mentioning these issues can be hard to talk about and that it is okay for them to ‘zone out,’ draw, etc.**
- Tell the youth that for this next activity, we’re going to look at different scenarios that could play out in a relationship. We have to decide and discuss which category we believe the relationship goes into and why. The categories are Healthy, Unhealthy, and Abusive. We’ll hear from the group with the card first, then we’ll open up the discussion to the rest of the group.

## Instructions

- Choose which statements to use for this activity (approximately 6-12). The statements you choose will depend on how much time there is, and which scenarios may be most relevant for the group.
- Make sure cards from each type are addressed.
- Divide youth into smaller groups of 2-3 and hand out scenarios, asking youth to think about what type of relationship it is – healthy, unhealthy, or abusive.
- Priority for each card is for youth to share their thoughts and discuss. Cards can be debriefed as necessary.

## Healthy

**My partner is happy for me when I do the things I enjoy, even if it’s not with them.**

The things you enjoy should be important to your partner, even if they are different from what they enjoy or if they can’t be there. Your partner can be supportive of your hobbies and activities by being interested, encouraging, helping, and giving you the space to pursue things that are important to you.

**My partner and I are comfortable sending naked pictures to each other.**

If consent is happening, then sharing pics is okay, with the understanding that they are not to be shared with anyone else. It would not be okay if one person was pressuring their partner or sending or sharing the photos without consent. Consent can be withdrawn at any time, including if the relationship ends.

Check out [thatsnotcool.com](https://thatsnotcool.com) for help to stop digital dating abuse. **Also, it is not your fault if someone is sharing your pictures. Talk to an adult you trust**

**if your pics are being seen without your consent or check out the website [needhelpnow.ca](http://needhelpnow.ca).**

Some ways to be safer with sexting are: not including your face or distinguishing features in the photo, using apps where the picture is only temporary, not sharing someone's photo, turning your location services off, etc.

FYI: It is against the law in Canada to send sexual pictures or videos of anyone who is, or appears to be, under 18 years old. This includes taking and sending sexual pictures or videos of yourself. According to section 163.1 of the Canadian Criminal Code, sexual pictures, or videos, of people under 18 years old, or who look like they are under 18 years old, are child pornography. However, the Supreme Court of Canada decided in 2001 that young people have a right to express themselves sexually by creating and sharing sexual images of themselves, as long as it is 100% consensual, the images stay private (are not shared or distributed by the person who receives them to someone else who was never supposed to see them), it falls within the ages of consent, and there is no physical or sexual assault or abuse depicted in the image or video.<sup>11</sup>

**You and your partner miss each other but enjoy spending time apart.**

Having a good time without your partner is an okay thing to do. We still get alone time, time with friends, and time with family. It can even mean you have lots more to tell each other when you are together.

**You and your partner don't tell each other everything, but you share a lot and trust each other.**

You have enough respect for each other to understand what information should be shared – hobbies and mutual interests – and what should not be shared, like passwords to social media sites and PIN codes to bank accounts. You understand boundaries are necessary for a healthy relationship.

**You feel jealous sometimes in your relationship but trust your partner and know how to take care of your uncomfortable feelings.**

Do people feel jealous sometimes? Yes. In healthy relationships, it's important to take responsibility for our feelings. **Healthy ways of dealing with jealousy are recognizing it is a normal emotion and understanding we are**

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<sup>11</sup> Slane, A. (2013). Sexting and the law in Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 22(3), 117–122.



**capable of healthy and respectful reactions no matter what the situation.**

If our partner is trying to make us jealous, that is unhealthy and not okay to do, but we can still choose to deal with our feelings in a healthy way.

Sometimes, giving ourselves time and space is a good idea. We may need time to calm down and to let go of the fear or insecurities we are feeling. Things to do can be taking a walk, going for a ride, listening to soothing music, and talking it through with someone we trust. **Sometimes in relationships, we find our feelings of jealousy are because of actual things our partner has done, like cheating or not telling us the truth. We might have to decide if the relationship is still the one for us.** If it's not, that is an okay choice, and we may have other relationships in the future. **However, if we are choosing to stay in a relationship that brings up our feelings of jealousy, we need to figure out ways to handle those feelings in a healthy and respectful way.**

## Unhealthy

**I try to make my partner jealous to see if they care about me.**

Jealousy is not a good way to gauge how much someone cares for us. Jealousy is a complicated emotion that is about self-esteem, past experiences, and fear of losing someone. There are healthier ways to ask for support, affection, and attention from a partner. Trying to make someone jealous is not part of a healthy relationship.

**Your partner texts you a lot during the day and gets mad if you don't answer.** Everyone deserves space, even from their partner. Feeling as though you don't have enough is a sign that your boundaries are not being respected. People don't owe us responses to our messages. Our partners don't have to respond right away; they may be busy and that's okay.

**You had a really good day, but don't tell your partner because you know they won't want to hear about it.**

Feeling the need to leave things out or hide things from your partner might mean there is a lack of support. If you feel worse or taken down after sharing your good feelings with a partner, it might be a sign of abuse. In a healthy relationship, your partner thinks your happiness is important. A supportive partner takes the time to hear about your day.

## It Depends

### **My partner likes to give me hickies to show how much they love me.**

There are many ways to show love that do not include physical markings. If hickies are being used to show that a person is 'taken' or 'owned' by their partner, that is control and abuse, not love. If someone enjoys hickies and gives consent, then this can be healthy. One part of this card that sounds like a warning flag is the 'to show how much they love me' bit. Are hickies a practical way to show love or care? (No.) What is a much easier way to show love? (With our words.)

### **My partner doesn't participate in my spirituality with me.**

Everyone has a right to their own spirituality. That also means that no one should be forced to participate in a religion or spirituality if they don't want to. In some relationships, partners practice different religions or spiritualities and are totally okay with that.

But if someone is put down because of their beliefs, feels like they can't practice their spirituality because of their relationship, or their partner is using religion or spirituality to control or manipulate them, it is abuse. In a healthy relationship, people feel free to practice their beliefs, even if they are different from their partner's.

On a larger scale, Residential Schools on this land were examples of spiritual abuse. These were places where Indigenous children and youth were forced to go by the Canadian government. The goal was to assimilate the children into white Christian culture, and in the process, have them not be 'Indian' anymore. There were many ways the government tried to do this, and we still see this racist idea existing in our society, often showing itself in the news/media and commonly through Canadians' opinions in social media.

## Abusive

### **My partner hits the wall and/or throws things when they are angry.**

It is not okay for a partner to use intimidation, even if they are angry and you are in a disagreement. Whether the anger is directed at you or not, anger should not be scary. This is abuse because it feels scary and sends the message that more abuse could follow.

It can help to think of anger as a secondary emotion. A primary feeling is what is felt right before we feel angry. We always feel something else first before we get angry. We might first feel afraid, attacked, offended, disrespected, forced, trapped, or pressured. If any of these feelings are intense enough, we think of the emotion as anger. In a healthy relationship, people still get angry but find ways to take responsibility for their feelings that don't scare their partner. Developing a relationship with oneself can help us to learn how to manage our feelings.

**My partner asks to borrow money all the time and doesn't pay me back.**

Not returning the money that has been lent to them is also financial abuse. You have no obligation to lend or give money to anyone if you don't want to, your partner included. Financial abuse is using money to control another person. In a healthy relationship, partners understand their money is their own and don't feel guilt or pressure to 'share' it.

FYI: If someone is doing sex work, they have rights too. People under 18, by law, are not allowed to sell sex (for money, drugs, food, protection, etc.). Not only would this fall under sexual and financial abuse, but partners or other people involved are guilty of sexual exploitation if this is happening.<sup>12</sup>

**My partner makes fun of my job and makes me feel bad for working weekends.**

Everyone has the right to work and earn money if they want to. If a partner is making you feel bad for working or intentionally trying to ruin your experience or reputation, then it would be considered financial abuse.

**When there is a disagreement, your partner uses the silent treatment or blocks you on social media.**

The silent treatment sends the message that the partner it's used on is not even worth talking to (dehumanizing) and leaves them with no option of a solution. It is used as a method of control and for one person to have power over their partner. In a way, it's deciding that only one partner gets to be mad. This is abuse. In a healthy relationship, if there are disagreements, people often let their partner know they need to 'take time' to cool down. That way, they are more able to find solutions.

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<sup>12</sup> Government of Manitoba. (n.d.). Families | Province of Manitoba. Retrieved June 24, 2021, from Province of Manitoba: Families website: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/traciustrust/index.html>

### **My partner refuses to wear a condom.**

Everyone has the right to be safer and use protection when having sex. If one partner wants to use a condom, not using one or pressuring them not to is sexual abuse.

### **When we have an argument, my partner hides my stuff so I can't leave.**

If someone is keeping you somewhere against your will, it is abuse. We have a right to leave a situation safely. In a healthy relationship, taking time and cooling down can help people come back together in a clearer headspace to work things out.

FYI: Canada's Criminal Code section 279 (2) defines forcible confinement as everyone who, without lawful authority, confines, imprisons or forcibly seizes another person.<sup>13</sup>

## **Debrief**

- Sometimes different types of abuse happen at the same time, and this can make it hard to tell which type of abuse is happening.
- Trusting ourselves, our instincts, and our feelings can help us figure out where we are on the relationship spectrum. **No matter where we land, we can all work at building healthier relationships, keeping in mind abuse is a choice and, in that situation, sometimes ending a relationship is the healthiest choice we can make.** If people recognize they are using abuse, it's a good thing, because then we can choose to change our behaviour and learn to become supportive partners. **We are all deserving of having healthy boundaries, support, and respect in our relationships.**

## **Space Invaders Activity\* (5 mins)**

\*This section was contributed by Jessica Danforth & the Native Youth Sexual Health Network and adapted by Teen Talk.

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<sup>13</sup> Legislative Services Branch. (2019). *Criminal Code*. Justice.gc.ca. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/section-279.html>

## Goals

- To discuss consent: explain consent, lack of consent and coercion, how alcohol/drugs impact consent and provide sexual assault resources.
- To explore the idea of personal space.

## Have Ready

- A big space that can fit all youth standing shoulder to shoulder in two rows facing each other. There should be at least 15 feet between the two lines of participants.

## Instructions

- Ask the youth to partner up and to stand across from one another.
- Explain to the youth that we will be using an activity to explore personal boundaries and consent.
- Ask youth to, **“Stand across from your partner. Decide who will be ‘the walker’ and who will be ‘the stander’.”**

## Part 1 of 3

### **(No talking or body language, just facial expression)**

- **For this exercise, the walker will move towards the stander. They need to successfully communicate with one another to ensure that the walker does not enter into the stander’s personal space. When the walker stops, they must move their entire body up to their furthest step. There is a catch, though! In this first part, the stander can only communicate their personal space with their facial expressions. No talking, hand gestures, or other body language.**

## Debrief

- **“How was that for everybody? Hands up standers, whose walker is currently inside their personal space?”** Ideally, several. **“Why do you think this is?”** Walker couldn’t tell/didn’t

notice that they were in their partner's space, there was no talking, and there was no other body language.

## **Part 2 of 3**

**(Switch roles, no talking, but can use body language/facial expression)**

- **Okay, part 2. Same instructions, same partners, except we're going to switch roles. Walkers become standers; standers become walkers. Now in this part, you can use your body language and hand gestures, but still no talking!**

## **Debrief**

- **"How was that for everybody? Hands up standers, whose walker is currently inside their personal space?"** Probably a bit better than part 1. **"What do you think could make this better?"** Talking, if the walker went slower. **"Why do you think solely relying upon body language sets us up for miscommunication?"** No one is a mind reader; you can easily misinterpret body language.

## **Part 3 of 3**

**(Switch roles, talking/body language/facial expressions allowed and encouraged)**

- **Okay, last part. Switch back to your first roles. Now, this time we want to see verbal communication between the walker and the stander! Talk to one another and negotiate those boundaries! Use your body language and facial expressions too!**

## **Debrief**

- **"How was that? Hands up standers, whose walker is currently inside their personal space?"** Should be the best result. **"What**

**made this one the most successful? Even if someone is inside someone else's personal space, why is it different this time around?"** They got permission/consent.

## **Consent (7 mins)**

### **Goals**

- Increase knowledge and comfort with navigating sexual consent.

### **Have Ready**

- This video about consent is called "Let's Talk About Consent" By #NYU <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBFCeGDVAdQ>

### **Debrief**

- This is how Teen Talk explains consent: **When it comes to sexual situations, "Does anyone know what the word consent means?" Consent is clear permission, which means that only yes means yes. It's a voluntary agreement, which means it's not something that one person does to another, but rather it's something that people decide to do together.**
- **Consent is about asking, listening, and respecting.** For example, let's say that you want to kiss someone, what would consent sound like? What would you say? Can I kiss you? I'd really like to kiss you. (Anything they say that is respectful.) You might be thinking this is kind of weird or hard, or it seems really awkward, but the more we do it, the more natural it becomes.
- **Let's practice asking for consent about something non-sexual.** Look to the person next to you and ask them to join you in an activity you want to do this weekend. For example, "Do you want to have lunch together, go swimming, play video games, etc. with me?" Truth is, we are using consent all the time. "Did any of you hear a yes?" Great. "Did anyone hear a no?" That is going to happen sometimes.
- **Part of asking for consent is listening to the response and respecting what they say/want. It's also important to pay attention to what they're doing non-verbally.**
- "If you ask if you can touch someone's bum and they say yes, it's bum touching time! If they say maybe later, I'm not sure, or nothing at all, what does that all mean?" No. **Sometimes hearing a no can feel hard or we might feel kind of rejected. Even though those feelings are normal, it's our responsibility to**

**deal with our feelings and respect the person who is saying no. Consent is also ongoing. This means that you have a right to say no at any time.** So, if in the middle of bum touching, someone wanted it to stop, what would have to happen? Stop. If someone says 'stop', or 'wait', looks uncomfortable, or is pulling away, stop and check-in with them. This could sound like, "You don't seem really into this." **If you are unsure, always stop and ask.**

- Asking for consent can be fun and sexy, and figuring out ways to talk about consent that feels comfortable for you can help. We know that it can be more complicated than just asking or saying, 'yes' or 'no.' People don't always talk about touching/sex before it happens; sometimes people communicate non-verbally, through eye contact and body language. **Ultimately, consent gives both people a chance to say whether or not they are into something and is part of creating trust and respect in our relationships.**
- So, we just talked a lot about what consent is, now we're going to share some things that consent is not. **Consent is not coercive, which means trying to change someone's no into a yes by pressuring, nagging, or using guilt.** It's also not okay to try to change someone's no into a yes with alcohol or drugs or to wait until someone is drunk or high to ask them for consent. What's the most respectful thing to do if people are drunk or high? Wait until they are sober, bring them water, help them get home, or watch over them, etc. **Ultimately, consent doesn't count when people are drunk or high.** That doesn't mean that every time there is drinking and sex it's a sexual assault, but we do know that it happens. **What's important to know is that any unwanted sexual attention or contact is not okay.**
- **If you have ever experienced sexual assault, it is never your fault.** It doesn't matter where you were, who you were with, what you were wearing, or if you were drunk or high. If someone chooses to assault another person, it's always the fault of the person who is choosing to use violence.
- **People have a right to be believed and get support. No one has to go through recovering from that experience alone.** It can help to talk to someone you trust. You can access support for you or a friend. If you know someone or have a friend that has



experienced a sexual assault, a couple of good things you can say are: “It’s not your fault,” and “I’m sorry this happened.” You can ask them how you can support them, and you can also give them information about the Sexual Assault Crisis Program. **The Klinik Sexual Assault Crisis Line is a great resource that people can call if they need to talk. You can also call the line if you’re feeling upset or unsure about a sexual experience. It is open 24/7 and free to call from anywhere in Manitoba. Their phone number is 1.888.292.7565 or 204.786.8631. If someone needs to go to the hospital or clinic after an assault, a counsellor from the Sexual Assault Crisis Program can be there to support them.**

## Action Planning (10 mins)

### Goal

- To teach practical examples of what people can do to get help.
- Educate about community resources for youth.

### Have Ready

- Write: “What can you do if your partner is abusive?” “How can you help a friend who is being abused?” “What can you do if you are abusing your partner?” on three flipcharts or a whiteboard.
- Markers and tape.

## Instructions

- Provide a disclaimer, mentioning these issues can be hard to talk about and that it is okay for them to draw, ‘zone out’, etc.
- Divide the youth into 3 groups and give each group a flipchart and markers. Give each group a flipchart with one of the following sample flipchart headings below. Facilitate within the small groups and get them to brainstorm the answers. Rotate the groups through the flipcharts ‘speed dating’ style, if time allows. Have one person/some people volunteer to read the list to the whole room and then debrief as a whole group.
- Remind them that the key things to think about are: safety, changing behaviour, and how and where to get support.

- When they are done with the flipcharts, post them and go through them as a large group so extra answers can be added from the other groups and information can be shared.
- If you are not breaking into groups or if time is short, you can have the youth brainstorm as a large group and write the answers on a flipchart. Three key overarching messages, if short on time, are:
  - Talk to someone you trust about it
  - End the relationship, if possible
  - Know it isn't your fault if you are being abused/Accept responsibility if you are abusing your partner

## Sample Flipcharts and Debrief

### What can you do if your partner is being abusive? (1<sup>st</sup> flipchart)

- **Tell someone you trust and/or a counsellor about what is going on.** You can call the Klinik Crisis Line (204.786.8686) or even go talk to someone you trust.
- **Know it is not your fault.**
- **End the relationship if you can.** Make a safety plan: try to do it in a public place or somewhere that you feel safe. This could also be through text/email/phone.
- **If you're not ending the relationship, make a safety plan for what you will do if you are in an emergency.** Think about how you will manage if you decide to stay in the relationship.
- Check-in with your family, friends, and people you trust regularly.
- Remember, you deserve to be safe at all times, in any situation.
- Talk to your partner but recognize that they may not change their behaviour.
- **Try to find and spend time focusing on things that give you strength.**
- Look for activities that help you connect to yourself. This could be connecting to your culture, practicing your religion (if you have one), or anything that makes you feel good or learn about yourself.
- **We know not everyone ends abusive relationships. There can be many reasons why it might be hard to leave an abusive relationship.** They could also still like, love, or care for their partner, even though they are being abusive. Their partner could

also threaten to hurt them, their friends/family, themselves, or even threaten suicide.

- **If a partner threatens suicide when you talk about breaking up with them, it is emotional abuse. This is a form of control.** We are not responsible for another person's life and are not helping them or ourselves if we stay in a relationship for fear they may harm themselves. **Ultimately, any person thinking of suicide needs help and support from more than just one person. We cannot be their sole means of support, but we can let an adult we trust know what's going on.**

### **What can you do if you are abusing your partner?** (2<sup>nd</sup> flipchart)

- Take responsibility for your own behaviour/admit you have a problem. If you are feeling bad about the way you have reacted or treated someone, that might actually be a good thing. It means that you are learning about yourself, and you can work to change your behaviour.
- End the relationship.
- Talk to someone about it, like a counsellor, crisis line, family member, or friend. Remember that abuse is behaviour, not a personality trait, and can be changed.
- Ask for help, get some support, find ways of coping and healing.
- Recognize when you are getting angry or feeling controlling. Learn your warning signs (feel hot/flushed, clenched fists/jaw, can't concentrate, etc.).
- Learn ways to calm yourself (take a deep breath, count to ten, go for a run/bike ride, call or talk to a friend, make a 'cool down' playlist, meditate, etc.). When thinking of ways to calm down, it's important to ask yourself, **"Does this activity turn my volume up or down?" If it turns your volume up, try something else.**
- Try to learn different ways of communicating and expressing your feelings (mindfulness, positive self-talk, etc.).
- Drop-in counselling.
- Join support groups to help deal with your feelings.
- Men's Resource Centre (16 years old and up in Winnipeg).
- EVOLVE at Klinik (for men over 18 years of age in Winnipeg).
- Note: For male-identified facilitators, if comfortable doing so, use the following: The abuse that happens to girls and women and

non-binary people is most often caused by boys/men. That makes it a 'guys' issue. One of the most important things that guys can do is to treat everyone with respect all of the time, even when it's 'just the guys.' We're not saying that all guys hurt others, but it is everyone's, including boys'/men's, responsibility to stop it. See Healthy Relationship for Guys under the toolkit for more activities.

**Abuse is complex. In some relationships, one person is clearly hurting the other, but there can also be relationships where both people use and experience abuse.** Two wrongs don't make a right. **Neither person deserves to be abused, and each person is still responsible for their own actions.** Either one or both people can choose to not use abuse, to get help, and to end the relationship while they do the work of healing.

The abuse that happens to girls and women is most often caused by boys/men. That makes it a guys' issue. **One of the most important things that guys can do is to treat girls and women with respect all the time, even when it's just the guys.** We're not saying that all guys hurt girls, but it is everyone's, including boys'/men's, responsibility to stop it.

### **Helping a friend** (3<sup>rd</sup> flipchart)

- If you are helping a friend, can they use all the same resources we've just talked about? Of course.

### **If a friend is being abused:**

- Listen without blaming. It is okay to state your concern for your friend, because they may not realize how alarming their situation is. However, if you try to make decisions for your friend, you are trying to control them, which is similar to what their partner is doing. Criticism and judgment are unhelpful. Criticism can also add to the silence, making it harder for your friend to get help and for you to provide support.
- Tell an adult you trust.
- Let them know it is not their fault.
- Spend time together, have fun.

- You can call the Klinik Crisis Line (204.786.8686) or talk to someone you trust.
- Be supportive by helping them create a safety plan and checking in with them as often as you can.
- Talk to a counsellor.
- Call a crisis line.
- It might seem obvious to people on the outside that an abusive relationship needs to end, but for all these reasons and more, it might be more complicated for the person dealing with the abuse. **The bottom line is that a person can't leave the relationship until they decide they are ready. If we want to be supportive, we need to be understanding of their choices.**

### **A friend is abusing their partner:**

- Approach your friend and ask them how they are feeling about the situation. Let them know it's okay to feel upset but let them know that their behaviour is not okay.
- Help them find resources.
- Go with them to get help.
- If you're worried about the safety of their partner, tell someone.
- It is also important to get support for ourselves when we are supporting other people so we can stay mentally well and deal with any feelings that come up.

### **If you see abuse happening: (verbal)**

- Scenario: You are in the hallway. You see a couple arguing, then you see a person push their partner into a locker and call them names.
- Pay attention to your feelings.
- Do something to show that you have witnessed the behaviour and are not okay with it.
- Say something ("that's not cool").
- Create a distraction (be loud, drop your gear).
- Ask either person if they are okay or need help.
- Let the person who is hurt know they "didn't deserve that."
- Tell an adult.

- Find someone you trust to talk to about your feelings and what you've witnessed.

## How to Build a Healthy Relationship (7 mins)

### Goals

- To identify characteristics of a healthy relationship.
- To encourage youth to expect and offer a healthy relationship as a means to avoiding abuse

### Have Ready

- Write 'Qualities of a Healthy Relationship' on a flipchart paper.
- Large post-it notes (or squares of scrap paper), markers, and tape.

### Instructions

- Hand out a marker and paper or post-it notes to everyone.
- Ask, **"What are we looking for in a healthy relationship?"**
- Get the youth to brainstorm the things that they would want in a healthy relationship and ask everyone to write one quality on their paper and post it on the flipchart.
- This activity may work well as a whole group brainstorm or go-around where each person gets to add a quality to the list. With a quiet, smaller group, this activity can be done as a drawing activity. Ask youth to draw or write out their version of a healthy relationship or write a letter to their future or current partner (everyone needs a paper and pencil). Invite any of the youth to share what they have created and explain their drawing to the rest of the group.

### Sample Flipchart

#### What Are Qualities of a Healthy Relationship?

- **Respect** - Partner has the right to make their own decisions. Treating each other well, even in disagreements. Supportive partners honour our relationships with ourselves.
- **Like/love/care** - Genuinely liking, loving, or caring for each other.
- **Acceptance** - Being able to be yourself/ Accepting your partner for who they are.
- **Communication** - Use open, honest, and assertive communication.
- **Affection** - Flirting, holding hands, making out, sex (definition is mutual).
- **Using consent** - Happens all the time in healthy relationships.
- **Listening** - To try and understand each other.
- **Time together and time apart** - Creating a balance.
- **Equality** - Each has equal say in the relationship.
- **Freedom** - To have own friends, interests, goals, and supports.
- **Boundaries** - What we do and don't want around sexual activities, time, privacy, and space.
- Healthy conflict.
- Doing activities that are fun together.
- Helping each other feel safe.
- Trust - Develops throughout the relationship.
- Sense of humour.
- Support, etc.

## Debrief

- Look how many qualities can be part of a healthy relationship!
- Acknowledge that we may not be seeing these things in all of the relationships we see in the media or our lives, but we can still plan to expect these things from a partner.
- If we haven't learned how to have a healthy relationship from our family or friends, then we can try and find people or couples who can teach us these qualities. Look for people who can teach you how to be a good partner, find positive role models.
- Let youth know that they don't have to be dating or thinking about dating to think about healthy relationships. A great time to make this list is before deciding to date.

- **To build a healthy relationship and receive the qualities on our lists, we must be willing to offer them to our partner as well. One of the best ways to have a healthy relationship is to know what one looks like for you and to expect one.** So, some unofficial homework is to think about and write down what you want out of a relationship. It might help to look for people whose relationships are healthy and try to learn from them.
- Healthy relationships take work and practice. Mention that we are all responsible for our actions and for the way we treat others.
- At Teen Talk, we ask youth, **“Is this a wish list, or a checklist?”** Checklist. We can all expect these things from our partners and from ourselves.
- Ask youth, **“Who deserves a relationship like this?”** (Everyone.) If we decide to date, we all have the right and the responsibility to develop healthy relationships.
- **Expecting a healthy relationship is the best thing anyone can do to prevent being in an abusive relationship.**
- Remind youth that you can be just as happy and fulfilled whether you are single or in a relationship.

## **Make a Commitment – Self-Reflection Activity (5 mins)**

### **Goals**

- *Reflect on personal responsibilities to create healthy relationships with self and others.*

### **Have Ready**

- Blank pieces of paper and pens

### **Instructions**

- Hand out blank pieces of paper and pens; ask youth to reflect and make a commitment to either their future partner or themselves regarding how they will treat them.
- Give youth at least five minutes.
- There is **no** expectation to share. Sometimes people want to share out loud to solidify their commitment.



## **Check-out (10 mins)**

- If they want to, invite youth to share what their commitment is.
- Hand out daily evaluation forms and give a heads up that the next session is the closing session so if they have any requests for topics to discuss, they should write them on the forms.
- Answer any questions from evaluations, if time.

## **Session 5: Questions & Answers and Leftover Discussion (30-60 mins)**

### **Note to Facilitator**

The intention of this last session is to spend some extra time discussing or doing activities. It might be helpful to expand on some topics that were cut short due to time constraints in other sessions; for example, the topics of self-esteem, pornography and how to be a man were typically conversations that could be given more time and attention. It might also be helpful to cover sexual health topics such as putting condoms on properly or information about STIs and Testing. (See the Service Provider section of our website for ideas, outlines and activities.) This is also the opportunity to answer any of the anonymous questions that were submitted on evaluation forms and were not yet answered.

### **Have Ready**

- Paper and pens for each person
- Colouring sheets and markers/pencil crayons
- Whiteboard or flipcharts
- Bring stress balls, tactile toys, fidget things, etc.
- Pre/Post Test – Appendix D
- Snacks or treats for all of the youths' hard work and dedication!

### **Group Check-in (go around) (5 mins)**

- Invite youth to share their favourite part or memory of the last four sessions.
- Invite them to tell any stories about sharing information from the sessions with others.

### **Workshop Introduction (5-45 mins)**

- Remind the group that this session will follow the same group agreement made in session one.
- Answer any questions from the last session/s (if any).
- Introduce the topics for this session (if any).

### **Check-out (10 mins)**

- Hand out daily evaluation forms.
- Answer any questions from forms.

### **Sessions Evaluation (5-10 mins)**





- Hand out the Pre/Post Test (Appendix D) for youth to fill out.
- Focus Group is optional.

### **Snacks/Food (10-30 mins)**

- Enjoy!
- This is an opportunity for informal chatting, discussions, and peer closeness, which is often missing for guys.

## Appendix A: Bingo Card

### BINGO

Go fishing	Ask Grandparents about their childhood	 Be affectionate with someone	Sit by the river	Play in the snow
 Smudge	Spend time with Elders	Ask for help from someone you trust	Play sports	 Nap
Draw or doodle	Breathe deeply three times in a row	 FREE SQUARE	Play with animals	Look after siblings/little kids
Speak a language other than English	 Listen or make music	Journal your thoughts	Laugh so much you cry	Believe a compliment about yourself
Play video games	Go for a bike ride	Spend time in nature	Go to ceremonies	 cook or bake

Here's what you do:

1. Walk around the room & find people who have or would use the above ways to cope.
2. Get them to sign the square if it applies to them.
3. You can only get someone to sign your sheet once, so get moving around the room and talk to different people.
4. Once you have a full line across or down, yell "BINGO." Claim the prizes!
5. If that was too easy, see if you can fill all your squares today. Good luck!

## **Appendix B: Relationship Activity Spectrum Cards**

**My partner is happy for me when I do the things I enjoy, even if it's not with them.**

**My partner and I are comfortable sending naked pictures to each other.**

**You and your partner miss each other but enjoy spending time apart.**

**You and your partner don't tell each other everything but you share a lot and trust each other.**

**You feel jealous sometimes in your relationship but trust your partner and**

**know how to take care of your uncomfortable feelings.**

**I try to make my partner jealous to see if they care about me.**

**Your partner texts you a lot during the day and gets mad if you don't answer.**

**My partner doesn't participate in my spirituality with me.**

**You had a really good day but don't tell your partner because you know they won't want to hear about it.**

**My partner likes to give me hickies to show how much they love me.**

**My partner hits the wall and/or throws things when they are angry.**

**My partner asks to borrow money all the time and doesn't pay me back.**

**My partner makes fun of my job and makes me feel bad for working weekends.**




**When there is a disagreement, your partner uses the silent treatment or blocks you on social media.**




**My partner refuses to wear a condom.**

**When we have an argument, my partner hides my stuff so I can't leave.**



## Appendix C: Workshop Evaluation Form





Daily Evaluation Form	 <b>YES!</b>	 <b>Somewhat</b>	 <b>Not at all</b>
1. I learned <b>new</b> information today.			
2. I can <b>use</b> the information in my life.			
3. The information was <b>easy to understand</b> .			
4. I will <b>share</b> this information with others			
The <b>most interesting</b> thing I learned today was:			
I would like to <b>know more about</b> :			

Daily Evaluation Form	 <b>YES!</b>	 <b>Somewhat</b>	 <b>Not at all</b>
1. I learned <b>new</b> information today.			
2. I can <b>use</b> the information in my life.			
3. The information was <b>easy to understand</b> .			
4. I will <b>share</b> this information with others			
The <b>most interesting</b> thing I learned today was:			
I would like to <b>know more about</b> :			

Appendix D: Pre/Post Test Form

Healthy Relationships for Guys Project Evaluation  
Pre Post-Evaluation Questionnaire

Please read each of the following statements and check off your best response:

	BEFORE the sessions:				AFTER the sessions:					
	Strongly agree 	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree 	Strongly agree 	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree 
I felt/feel comfortable talking about consent with my partner										
I had/have a good understanding of healthy relationship										
I had/have a good understanding of the factors that affect youth self-esteem										
I was/am aware of community resources available for youth										
I felt/feel good about my body										
I knew/know how to cope with stress										

Overall, how would you rate this workshop?      Poor      Fair      Good      Excellent

If you could add or change anything about the workshop, what would it be?

Thanks for sharing your thoughts!