

# SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON PLAN

## “DATING VIOLENCE”

**Grade: High School**

### OBJECTIVES

The High School student will:

1. List characteristics of a safe, healthy relationship.
2. Define an action plan to use if you are experiencing dating violence.
3. Combat the myths of dating violence with the truthful facts.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Student needs:

- Pencil
- Notebook

Teacher needs:

- Chart paper
- Permanent marker
- Ideal Relationship Do's and Don'ts
- Ideal Relationship chart
- Myths and Facts about Dating Violence
- Assessment materials:
  - Dating checklist True and False: Dating Violence

### CONTENT

#### HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

All relationships require respect, selflessness, trust, and honest communication. When these four characteristics are present, a relationship is safe and healthy. In other words, a healthy, safe relationship is one that honors the dignity and worth of the human being and allows each person to grow and flourish spiritually, physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

These four characteristics of a healthy relationship are not typically the ones that we hear about from pop culture. Usually, the messaging is that relationships are all about me and that we should get what we want, when we want it, with whom we want it, however we want it, etc. Of course, this is not a message of true love; it is not God's plan for our sexuality. God's plan for our sexuality is one of selflessness – a life where we put others before ourselves. Selflessness is a lifestyle that will bring you joy.

Whether you are in a dating relationship or not, it is important to know what to look for in a potential boyfriend or girlfriend. Dating relationships should reflect your personal standards and values. You should look for a counterpart who meets (or exceeds) your high standards, not someone who will force you to lower the bar. Remember that dating, even at your age, is a practice in vocation. This means that the person you date now and what you do in your

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON PLAN**

### **“DATING VIOLENCE”**

dating relationship today shapes the husband or wife you could be.

Let's start with what the ideal is – what we look for in a boyfriend or girlfriend (and ultimately a spouse). Take a few minutes to brainstorm some ideas for what an ideal boyfriend or girlfriend does or does not do. (Give students time to fill in the chart and then ask some people to volunteer their answers. When the answers have been shared, display the list of additional ideas.)

#### **UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

No relationship is perfect. All relationships are between two human beings, and as human beings, none of us are perfect. All of us struggle to become better, more holy versions of ourselves. We are all flawed human beings because we are born with original sin. I am sure that we all remember the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Our communion with God at that time was wounded. We are all affected by original sin and need restoration. Even though we are all created in the perfect image and likeness of God, each of us also has the gift of free will, which allows us to make decisions that sometimes draw us farther away from God.

Because we are imperfect human beings, we are sinners. We have a tendency towards using others. We look for ways that someone can fulfill some need or desire we have. We see relationships that are not based on respect, trust, and honest communication. We see relationships where someone is being abused. We see relationships that lack respect and are based on deceit, infidelity, and lies. We may have experienced these ourselves or perhaps we have seen it in our own families and neighborhoods. Unfortunately, too many of us have experienced the effects of an abusive dating relationship in some way.

#### **NO, GO, TELL SAFETY RULES**

Just as we learn STOP, DROP, and ROLL as a slogan for fire safety, we will use the phrase NO, GO, TELL to recall personal safety rules. As a review of the rules of what to do if you are in an abusive dating relationship, the simple action plan is called NO, GO, TELL.

1. NO – We say, “NO, I don't like that!” in a loud, assertive voice and use body language to signal “NO.” Remember that being assertive means saying exactly what you mean, directly and confidently. Body language may be stepping back from the person, putting up your hands, or crossing your arms. We say “NO!” loudly because we respect ourselves and want to stay safe.
2. GO – After we yell, “NO, I don't like that!” or some other assertive phrase, the next step is to GO away from the person. This means physically removing yourself from the environment you are in with that person. This may mean leaving a party, a friend's house, a classroom, or wherever you are with the person who is abusing you.

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON PLAN

### “DATING VIOLENCE”

3. TELL – The last step is to tell a trusted adult about what happened. When you tell an adult, you are doing the right thing. This takes a lot of courage because you are telling a trusted adult about being hurt by someone who you think you love, but remember that someone that loves you and respects you would NEVER abuse you. God gave you these trusted adults to keep you safe and they need to know if someone makes you feel unsafe. If you are being abused in any way, it is not your fault – and that person deserves the repercussions for his or her actions. Even if you didn't try to stop them from touching you or engaging in sexual acts with you or even if they tell you that you asked for it, it is never your fault. It is important to not keep secrets about abuse, even if someone makes you promise not to tell anyone. When you tell a trusted adult, they need to believe you and listen. If they don't believe you, go tell another adult.

#### **MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE**

The Devil uses a number of destructive tactics to try to lure us into sinful behavior. These include trying to make us fearful, trying to confuse us, or trying to keep our sins hidden. Often, all of these things happen with the sin of abuse. Frequently, someone in an abusive situation cannot get out. They feel trapped, as they may love the person who is hurting them or else they may feel there is nowhere else to go. Moreover, they may think that they deserve the abuse. None of those ideas are true, although the abuser may try to feed the victim these lies so that they will not get into trouble for being abusive.

Let's get the facts straight about violence in dating. We are going to dispel the five most common myths about dating violence and bring the truth to light!

***Myth: Dating violence is rare.***

***Fact: One in three teens is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a boyfriend or girlfriend.***

To be more specific, young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of dating violence. One quarter of high school girls have been the victims of physical or sexual abuse. This is and should be a startling statistic to hear.

***Myth: Dating violence only happens in poor, low-income, minority communities.***

***Fact: People of all cultures, races, income levels, and ages are abused in relationships.***

Unfortunately, no one is exempt from dating violence. Dating violence is a huge problem, affecting the youth of every community in every state across the country. This epidemic needs to be addressed because it has serious ramifications for the victim. These include putting the victimized person at a higher risk for having an eating disorder, engaging in risky sexual behavior, substance abuse, and further dating violence.

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON PLAN

### “DATING VIOLENCE”

**Myth: Pornography use has no connection to dating violence.**

**Fact: Pornography is used frequently in dating violence to coerce the victim or desensitize them.**

Many instances of dating violence and sexual abuse involve pornography. The perpetrator may show the victim pornography to desensitize them to some perverse sexual act that the abuser wants to do. Watching pornography releases a complex, powerful soup of neurochemical transmitters that alters the brain's chemistry and even its structure. This can lead the perpetrator to believe that rape, incest, and other graphic sexual violence is normal and appropriate sexual behavior. In addition, many victims of dating violence feel coerced or pressured to perform sexual acts against their will – the very definition of rape.

**Myth: Anyone who is being abused in a relationship must be fine with it, or they would leave.**

**Fact: No one likes the pain and humiliation of an abusive relationship. There are many reasons why both men and women stay in abusive relationships.**

Some of these reasons include: Fear of what might happen if they left, reliance on the abuser for money or a place to live, believing that abuse is normal and common for a relationship, low self-esteem (believing the abuse is their fault), or looking for love and hoping that the abuser will change. As compassionate Christians, the most important thing to remember if we have friends or relatives in an abusive relationship is to listen to them, love them, and never judge them. Try to help them and let them know that they have options – they do not need to endure the abuse.

**Myth: Alcohol and/or substance abuse causes violence in relationships.**

**Fact: The use of alcohol or drugs significantly increases the risk of violence or abuse in relationships, but they are not the cause or an excuse.**

The use of drugs or alcohol often leads people to make poor decisions and to do things that they ordinarily wouldn't do. It increases the risk of violence in a relationship (including emotional or verbal abuse), as well as the risk of engaging in sex, getting a sexually transmitted disease, becoming pregnant, and developing an addiction. If there is already abuse in your relationship, the use of drugs or alcohol can make it worse, and abuse that takes place while a person is drunk or high can easily lead to it being repeated when they are sober. Often, a person who abuses substances doesn't recognize their problem and will try to avoid any responsibility for their bad decisions by blaming the drugs or alcohol.

Caring for a person does not mean that you have to accept their bad behavior. Healthy relationships are free of substance abuse. If someone you care about has a problem with drugs or alcohol, seek help for yourself and for them!

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON PLAN

### “DATING VIOLENCE”

It is important to reinforce this fact: Abuse of any kind is NEVER okay. If you are being abused in a dating relationship, you are not alone. The Church is here to help. You are worth so much more than the way you are being treated. Let us help you be free from the abuse. When we put ourselves in the victim's shoes, we feel pain, hurt, discouragement, and isolation. The various types of abuses are serious sins against the dignity of each human person, and they carry serious consequences to those who abuse others. In addition to breaking the city or state law, someone who abuses another person is breaking the moral law of God. Abuse is a sin against God's law because it robs the other person of their dignity. Everyone has a duty under God's law to respect and care for others. By abusing someone, they go against everything that God asks of us. It is then their responsibility as an offender to seek forgiveness from God for their sins, to seek forgiveness from those they have hurt, and to seek forgiveness from the community that has been harmed from their abuse.

#### **WHAT CAN WE DO – TURNING BACK TO AUTHENTIC MAN AND WOMAN**

So what can we do to combat the problem of dating violence? The answer lies in returning to our characteristics of authentic manhood and authentic womanhood – the way that God designed us. God designed authentic man to conquer self desires, protect and provide, and to sacrifice for those he loves. God designed authentic woman to nurture and care for others, be receptive and model beauty in all its forms. In both authentic man and woman, we are called to respect the gift of the other person, as someone with God-given dignity. We are called to be selfless and to respect others, not looking at how others can be of use to us.

The way you exist in the world, as authentic man or authentic woman, is exceptionally important. Remember that you were placed in this world, at this time, with this body and soul of yours, as a man or woman, for a specific reason. God created you this way and you will be fully alive and fully yourself when you embrace your authentic design and live out God's will for your life.

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

O blessed Saint Joseph, we come to you and confidently implore your assistance. We humbly beg that, mindful of your affection which bound you to the Immaculate Mother of God, and of your fatherly love with which you cherished Jesus, you will lovingly watch over those Jesus purchased with His blood, and by your powerful intercession help us in our urgent need.

Most powerful guardian of the Holy Family, graciously come to our aid.

Sustain us always in your keeping, that, following by your example, and borne by your

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSON PLAN

### “DATING VIOLENCE”

strength, we may lead holy lives. Amen.

#### ASSESSMENT

Ask student to complete:

- Dating checklist (Resource A)
- True and False: Dating Violence (Resource B)

# TEACHER RESOURCES COVER PAGE

- Ideal Relationship Do's and Don'ts
- Ideal Relationship chart
- Myths and Facts about Dating Violence

# Ideal Relationship Do's and Don'ts

<b>DO'S</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
<p data-bbox="168 653 748 821">An ideal partner would...</p>	<p data-bbox="886 653 1466 821">An ideal partner would NOT...</p>



# Ideal Relationship

## Do's and Don'ts

<b>DO'S</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
<p data-bbox="167 653 751 821"><b>An ideal partner would...</b></p> <ul data-bbox="155 856 789 1906" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="155 856 789 999">• treat you with respect</li><li data-bbox="155 1020 789 1083">• listen to your ideas</li><li data-bbox="155 1104 789 1247">• share some of your interests</li><li data-bbox="155 1268 789 1411">• be comfortable around your family</li><li data-bbox="155 1432 789 1575">• be proud of your accomplishments</li><li data-bbox="155 1596 789 1738">• respect your boundaries</li><li data-bbox="155 1759 789 1906">• act selflessly towards you</li></ul>	<p data-bbox="881 653 1466 821"><b>An ideal partner would NOT...</b></p> <ul data-bbox="881 856 1455 1906" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="881 856 1455 919">• make fun of you</li><li data-bbox="881 940 1455 1003">• put you down</li><li data-bbox="881 1024 1455 1247">• get angry if you spend time with friends/family</li><li data-bbox="881 1268 1455 1411">• require you to "check in"</li><li data-bbox="881 1432 1455 1659">• pressure you to do things you don't want to do</li><li data-bbox="881 1680 1455 1743">• be selfish</li><li data-bbox="881 1764 1455 1906">• threaten you or make you scared</li></ul>

# Myths and Facts about Dating Violence

Myth: Dating violence is very uncommon.

**Fact: One in three teens is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a boyfriend or girlfriend.**

Myth: Dating violence only happens in poor, low-income minority communities.

**Fact: People of all cultures, races, income levels, and ages are abused in relationships.**

Myth: Pornography use has no connection with dating violence.

**Fact: Pornography is used frequently in dating violence to coerce the victim or desensitize them.**

Myth: Anyone who is being abused in a relationship must be fine with it, or they would just leave.

**Fact: No one likes the pain and humiliation of an abusive relationship. There are many reasons why both men and women stay in abusive relationships.**

Myth: Alcohol and/or substance abuse causes violence in relationships.

**Fact: Although there is a link between alcohol and/or substance abuse and violence in relationships, it is not the cause of the abuse. Drinking or doing drugs does not cause people to become violent and abuse their boyfriend or girlfriend.**

*Adapted from Sexual Abuse Advisory Board, Stanford University and New Beginnings Crisis Center*

# ASSESSMENT RESOURCE COVER PAGE

- Dating checklist (Resource A)
- True and False: Dating Violence (Resource B)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Dating Checklist

Check the boxes that describe the characteristics that you would choose in a potential boyfriend/girlfriend.

Is proud of your accomplishments on a sports team	
Threatens you with physical force	
Understands the importance of family and friends	
Has a moral value system/faith	
Gets angry if you spend time with friends	
Isn't excessively negative	
Doesn't make fun of your hobbies	
Treats you with respect	
Isn't afraid to share thoughts and feelings	
Ignores your ideas	
Shares some common interests	
Tries to overstep your boundaries	
Doesn't pressure you to do what you don't want to do	
Is caring and honest	

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## True or False: Dating Violence

Circle TRUE or FALSE for each statement. If FALSE, explain a truth that applies to that statement.

People fall into abusive relationships because they are not smart enough to stay away from bad people.	<b>T or F</b>
If false...	
Alcohol and/or drug abuse can lead to an abusive relationship.	<b>T or F</b>
If false...	
If someone wants to get out of an abusive relationship, it should be easy to leave.	<b>T or F</b>
If false...	
Dating violence is rare.	<b>T or F</b>
If false...	
Anyone of any race, gender, faith, culture, etc. can be in an abusive relationship.	<b>T or F</b>
If false...	

# THE TRUTH AND BEAUTY OF OUR SEXUALITY

One of the great gifts of our Catholic faith is our positive and beautiful view of sexuality.

## **We are made for love**

We can't live without love. Every human person, made in the image and likeness of God, has been given a vocation to love. We are all drawn to relationships where we can experience genuine love -- friendships and romantic relationships, but ultimately in the vocation of marriage. We know this from our own hearts, which long for love.

## **The language of our bodies**

To break out of our loneliness, we have to listen to the language of our bodies, and to the meaning God has put there. Essentially, our bodies tell us that God has made us for the gift of ourselves in the communion of persons of marriage. This is called the "nuptial meaning of the body", and it's the starting point to living the truth and beauty of our sexuality.

## **Real sex and real relationships**

Our sexuality is designed to bring us into relationships in which we can truly love others, by giving ourselves to them. For most of us, we find this in marriage, when we give ourselves to our spouse fully, fruitfully, and forever. But we also see it in priesthood, religious life, friendship and parenthood. In these relationships, through the gift of ourselves, we find love and happiness and we bring it into the lives of others.

## **Use and misuse**

All too often, unfortunately, we don't live according to God's plan. Instead, we buy into the world's view of sex. We use others for our own pleasure, we manipulate others for our ends, or we deliberately sterilize our sexual acts. When we do this, we're not giving ourselves fully in life-giving love. That's surely not where God wants us to be, and we all suffer the consequences -- loneliness, frustration, and feeling used and empty.



## **Redeemed sex**

Fortunately, there's hope -- we're not stuck in the trap of use and misuse. Jesus Himself has redeemed us and our sexuality by speaking the truth about marriage, sex and love, and showing us God's plan for us. When He gave Himself fully and completely to His spouse -- to us -- on the cross, He freed us from our selfishness and showed us that we can also give ourselves to others in love. Thanks to Jesus, and with His help, we can live God's plan for us.

## **What must we do?**

We have to make sure that work to understand this positive and beautiful vision of our sexuality. This is the responsibility of all of us; our parents, our Church's programs, and especially ourselves to reinforce it and ensure that we can grow in an environment of safety and virtue and trust. To do this of course, we MUST embrace the gift ourselves.

When we approach it with prayer and an open heart, this teaching is liberating and transforming, and can lead us to truly live God's plan of life and love.

## **Want to learn more?**

The best way to do this is to learn more about our Church's teaching, particularly Pope John Paul's "theology of the body". Here are some suggestions:

[www.theologyofthebody.net](http://www.theologyofthebody.net)

Theology of the Body for Beginners, Christopher West (Ascension Press, 2004).

Good News About Sex and Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching, Christopher West (Servant Publications, 2000)

Real Love: Answers Your Questions on Dating, Marriage and the Real Meaning of Sex, Mary Beth Bonacci (Ignatius Press, 1996).