Nurturing Respectful Connections
A guide for teachers to support secondary school students' understanding of healthy relationships at home and school
Introduction

Importance of healthy relationships and respect for gender

Welcome to this essential teaching resource designed to empower you with knowledge and practical strategies to create a safe and inclusive environment for teenagers to learn about healthy relationships and foster respect for others at home and school. As students navigate the complexities of adolescence, it becomes increasingly crucial for educators to take an active role in guiding our young learners towards forming meaningful connections and understanding the significance of respect and empathy.

Adolescence is a time of profound growth and development, marked by emotional, physical, and social changes. At this pivotal stage, teenagers are exploring their identities and beliefs, forming friendships and other relationships, and embarking on their journey to adulthood. As educators, we have a unique opportunity to help shape their perceptions and attitudes towards relationships, supporting them to build strong foundations for their future.

In today's interconnected world, teenagers are exposed to a myriad of influences, including media portrayals, societal norms, peer pressures, online influencers, gaming and unregulated social media. As a result, misconceptions about gender roles, gender and sexual identity, stereotypes, and unhealthy relationship dynamics can infiltrate their lives. These misconceptions can lead to harmful behaviours, perpetuate inequality, and hinder emotional development.

Moreover, the prevalence of cyberbullying, online harassment, and relationship abuse requires us to be proactive in equipping our students with the skills to recognize and address such issues.

By fostering an atmosphere of respect, open communication, and inclusivity, we can empower teenagers to navigate challenges and cultivate positive connections in all aspects of their lives.

Understanding Healthy Relationships: We will delve into the characteristics of healthy relationships, emphasizing trust, communication, empathy, and mutual respect. By fostering emotional intelligence, teenagers can recognize and nurture healthy connections with family, friends, and romantic partners.

Promoting Respect and Equality: We will address prevailing stereotypes and explore the importance of equality and inclusivity. This will encourage teenagers to challenge societal norms and embrace diversity, allowing them to build authentic connections that transcend limiting identities and roles.

Media and Cultural Influences: We will explore media representations of relationships, gender, sexuality, harmful stereotypes and messages perpetuated by media and social influencers, promoting critical thinking and media literacy skills.

Navigating Digital Relationships: As technology becomes increasingly ingrained in teenagers’ lives, we will provide tools to help them build positive and respectful connections in the digital realm, while staying safe from potential risks.

Understanding Unhealthy Relationships: In order to raise awareness of unhealthy relationships, we will explore signs of abusive behaviour, understanding how domestic abuse can be perpetuated, and the impact of gender-based violence.
By empowering teenagers to identify red flags early on, we can support them to make better decisions, and build a safer environment.

**Consent and Boundaries in Relationships:** We will explore consent and boundaries in relationships, signs of dating violence, understanding the role of gender-based violence and power dynamics in abusive relationships and how to empower students to seek help and support for themselves or others.

**Effective Communication:** Effective communication is the cornerstone of any healthy relationship. Through activities and discussions, we can develop students experience in expressing themselves, resolving conflicts respectfully, and actively listening to others.

**Objectives of the teaching resource**

The primary goal is to educate young people about what healthy connections and relationships are, and raise awareness of what is not healthy in a wide range of connections and relationships with others. Being informed can help students to avoid abusive experiences and relationships and equip them to take positive actions, and understand the importance of respect and safety in all connections with others.

This resource offers a structured approach to exploring these topics and suggests activities, discussion questions, information and more targeted resources that you can choose from to support this learning.

**How to use this teaching resource**

The resource is divided into topics with a resource section at the end. You can select topics or parts of topics that you wish to introduce to your students, or you can use the whole resource.

The resource is for teachers to gain ideas and approaches to the topics. The colour boxes give some background to the topic area being investigated. The white boxes offer an example exercise or activity that you could do with the class.

We hope that this resource will give you ideas of topics and activities to help you embark on this opportunity to help young people explore and understand ideas around healthy relationships at home and at school.

We work internationally and it is important that we consider the context of each country we work in. Each country has different laws and practice and teachers in each area will know how best to adapt this resource for their specific context.

We have educators in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, South Africa and the USA who are adapting the resource for use locally.
In the UK, Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) has been compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education. Around the world, there are varying approaches to this topic in the curriculum. This resource can help support your curriculum aspects of understanding relationships, in all their forms, but does not cover the full sex and health education aspects. This resource can be used to help build, or add to, your wider curriculum around this subject.

As well as exploring all types of relationships between people, pupils need to also be able to explore and understand the dynamics of sexual relationships, sexuality, and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way to support their broader understanding of relationships.

Planning your curriculum

Suggested learning outcomes:
- to show awareness of other people's feelings and to try to see things from other points of view;
- to think about the lives of people living in other places and times, and people with different values and customs;
- to be aware of different types of relationship, including romantic, and those between friends, families, and peers and to develop the skills to be effective in relationships;
- to realise the nature and consequences of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, teasing, bullying, aggressive behaviours, and how to respond to them and ask for help;
- to recognise and challenge stereotypes;
- that differences and similarities between people arise from a number of factors, including cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, ability, gender, sexuality and other forms of diversity;
- where individuals, families and groups can get help and support.

Relationships education complements several other curriculum subjects. You can look for opportunities to draw links between the subjects in this resource and integrate teaching where appropriate.

For example, you could link these topics into:
- content in computing relating to online and media portrayals,
- literary texts which touch on emotional aspects of relationships.

Points to consider when planning your curriculum

When planning your curriculum, consider mapping out terms, years and key stages to help decide which topics you will cover and when. Also, consider whether there are topics which will need to be covered more than once as pupils grow in maturity.

You will also need to consider the most appropriate method for teaching certain topics. This could mean having:
- regular lessons – for example, a weekly or fortnightly slot in class taught by the class teacher,
- a teacher or other appropriate adult in school who teaches a particular topic to all classes in turn.
• additional whole school / key stage assemblies, either led by staff at school or by a carefully selected external speaker or expert - it’s important to remember that assemblies should not be a substitution for timetabled lessons.

Teachers should be aware of age-inappropriate material on the internet. Great caution should be exercised before setting any assignment, in class or at home, that involves researching a subject where there is a high risk that a child could accidentally be exposed to age-inappropriate material.

Creating a safe and inclusive classroom

Consider what it is like for a diverse range of pupils to be taught about these topics. All pupils need to understand their emotional development to make positive decisions in their lives. Frame issues in an appropriate way, and take additional time to explain to parents and carers what will be taught and why.

Some pupils may have already been exposed to, or be at risk of exposure to, the negative/discriminatory/unhealthy experiences and content being taught. Developing a sensitive teaching style will be key to ensuring all pupils feel safe and supported in lessons and able to engage with the key messages.

As well as classroom teaching, you may want to consider other options including digital approaches, one-to-one discussions, teaching in small groups or targeted sessions for some pupils.

It is possible that you may see an increase in disclosures as a result of teaching the new subjects. You should remind all staff members of the correct procedures to follow, should any disclosures from individual pupils be prompted by lessons in these subjects.

To help create a safe environment for pupils when teaching these topics, you should consider:

• setting ground rules for lessons, where needed, particularly around not sharing personal information,
• stopping discussions if personal information is shared in lessons and following up with pupils later where needed,
• not promising confidentiality if a pupil confides something concerning,
• telling pupils they can ask for help and they will be taken seriously.

You can avoid embarrassment and protect pupils’ privacy by depersonalising discussion, for example, using a case study to illustrate an issue. Pupils can then talk about a fictional character in the case study without having to share personal information. You should manage and lead discussions attentively. If the discussion is at risk of straying, you need to be prepared to redirect it back to intended topics.

This resource has been developed by The Steve Sinnott Foundation

https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk

Contributors:

Isata M Kamara
Marie Antoinette Corr
Will Thomas
Rebecca Truscott-Elves
Jeanine Connor
Evadne Bygrave
Ameeta Sabharwal
Lucy Lee

Special thanks:

Lindsay Green (Soroptimists Yorkshire)
Gurukula Primary School
A. Definition of a healthy relationship

Relationship refers to the way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected. It is important to understand the wide range of relationships we have with people, our family, our friends, peers, working relationships, collaborators, as well as sexual relationships.

A healthy relationship is characterized by mutual respect, trust, effective communication, and emotional support between individuals.

In such relationships, each person’s boundaries, needs, and feelings are acknowledged and valued.

There is open dialogue and active listening, allowing conflicts to be addressed constructively.

A foundation of equality and shared decision-making promotes a sense of partnership and autonomy for both parties.

Healthy relationships also encompass a sense of safety, where physical, emotional, and psychological well-being are prioritized.

Encouraging growth, empathy, and understanding, healthy relationships foster a positive environment that nurtures personal development and emotional connections.

A1. Activity idea

Share some examples of relationship dynamics that are healthy. Invite the group to discuss what makes a relationship healthy. Then invite the group to work on defining their own definition of what a healthy relationship is.

B. Defining respect for gender

Defining respect for gender involves acknowledging and appreciating the diversity and fluidity of gender roles and identities. It entails treating all individuals with dignity and equality, irrespective of their gender and identity.

Respecting gender involves challenging stereotypes and harmful societal norms that perpetuate discrimination and inequality based on gender.

Respecting gender also allows individuals to celebrate and feel proud of their gender, and understand the unique challenges faced in adolescence and puberty.

Emphasizing inclusivity and providing a safe space for open discussions, this understanding of respect for gender encourages students to embrace and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual’s gender identity, fostering an environment of acceptance, empathy, and empowerment.

By promoting respect for gender, we strive to create a society where everyone can freely express their authentic selves without fear of judgment or prejudice.

B1. Question ideas

- What is gender?
- Are gender roles fluid?
- Is gender fluid?
- How do gender stereotypes affect people?
C. Exploring the spectrum of gender identities and expressions

Across cultures, genders exist beyond the traditional binary classification, encompassing a diverse range of identities and expressions. This spectrum includes but is not limited to cisgender, transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and genderfluid individuals.

Emphasizing the significance of cultural sensitivity, we can encourage students to appreciate the richness and complexity of global gender diversity.

By promoting awareness and empathy towards different gender experiences, we can create a supportive space that validates and respects the identities of all students, irrespective of their gender expression, and empowers them to express their authentic selves confidently.

**Gender identities:**
- Cisgender: An individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Transgender: An individual whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Non-binary: Individuals who do not exclusively identify as male or female, but may identify as a combination of both genders, as neither, or as a different gender altogether.
- Genderqueer: A term used by individuals whose gender identity does not conform to conventional expectations of male or female.

**Expressions and experiences:**
- Gender expression: The way individuals outwardly express their gender identity through behavior, clothing, and appearance.
- Fluidity: The idea that an individual’s gender identity or sexual orientation may change over time.

D. Challenging stereotypes and societal norms related to gender roles

Challenging stereotypes and societal norms related to gender roles is a pivotal aspect of promoting gender equality and inclusivity within our school community.

We can empower students to critically examine and question preconceived notions about what is traditionally considered “masculine” or “feminine” and the gender roles and expectations in society.

By encouraging open discussions and providing diverse perspectives, we can dismantle harmful stereotypes that limit individual potential and perpetuate inequality.

Students can be inspired to explore their interests and passions freely, breaking away from rigid gender expectations and embracing a more inclusive understanding of gender.

By challenging these norms, we create an environment where students can thrive based on their abilities and talents, fostering a society that values and celebrates each person’s unique contributions regardless of gender.

D1. Question ideas

- What are the gender expectations that you feel are placed on people by society?
- Do you think there are benefits to gender roles?
- Are there disadvantages to gender roles?
- How have gender roles changed through history?
- If you could change one thing about gender roles/stereotypes in society, what would that be?

C1. Research ideas

Find famous transgender people in history and contemporary examples.
E. Respect and understanding of sexuality

Challenging stereotypes and societal norms surrounding sexuality necessitates a reexamination of ingrained biases and misconceptions.

This involves advocating for diverse representation in media and education, dismantling harmful assumptions through open dialogue, and promoting inclusive language and terminology.

Encouraging empathy and understanding, addressing discrimination, and creating safe spaces are pivotal in fostering an environment where individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities feel accepted and respected.

Embracing intersectionality and acknowledging the complexity of identities beyond sexuality further enhances efforts to challenge societal norms.

By consistently questioning and confronting stereotypes, we strive to create a world that celebrates diversity, empowers individual expression, and fosters a more inclusive and equitable society for everyone.

Sexual orientations:
- Heterosexuality: Attraction to people of a different gender.
- Homosexuality: Attraction to people of the same gender.
- Bisexuality: Attraction to people of the same or different gender.
- Pansexuality: Attraction to individuals regardless of gender identity or expression.
- Asexuality: A lack of sexual attraction to others or a low interest in sexual activity.
- Queer: An umbrella term used by some individuals to describe non-normative sexual orientations and/or gender identities.

E. Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other identities, and how they overlap and intersect, creating unique experiences and forms of discrimination for individuals.

Race and Sexuality: Individuals from diverse racial backgrounds might experience different societal expectations or stereotypes regarding their sexuality. The intersection of race and sexuality can lead to specific challenges or prejudices that are distinct from those experienced by individuals of different racial or sexual identities.

Gender Identity and Sexuality: Transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals may face discrimination or marginalization not only based on their sexual orientation but also due to their gender identity. This intersection can result in complex challenges related to acceptance, access to healthcare, and social inclusion.

Socioeconomic Status and Sexuality: Economic disparities intersect with sexuality, affecting access to resources and support. Marginalized communities might face additional barriers in accessing inclusive healthcare, education, or safe environments, impacting their experiences of sexuality.

Cultural and Religious Contexts: Cultural norms and religious beliefs can significantly influence how sexuality is perceived and accepted within specific communities. These norms intersect with an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity, affecting their acceptance or rejection within their cultural or religious context.

Understanding intersectionality helps recognize that an individual’s experience of sexuality is not solely shaped by their sexual orientation or gender identity. Instead, it’s a complex interplay of various social identities and structures that affect how they navigate relationships, access resources, and encounter discrimination or acceptance within society. Embracing an intersectional approach is crucial in creating more inclusive spaces and addressing the diverse needs and experiences of individuals across different intersections of identity.
Relationships At SCHOOL
A. Promoting respectful interactions among peers and teachers

Promoting respectful interactions among students and teachers is paramount in cultivating a positive and inclusive learning environment.

Implementing clear and consistent expectations for respectful communication, both in and outside the classroom, ensures that students understand the significance of treating one another with kindness and dignity.

B. Addressing and identifying unhealthy relationships and bullying in school

Addressing unhealthy relationships and bullying in school requires a proactive and comprehensive approach to create a safe and supportive environment.

Implementing anti-bullying policies and restorative practices helps address conflicts and harmful behaviours constructively. Educating students through workshops and discussions on empathy, emotional intelligence, and healthy relationship dynamics empowers them to identify and address bullying proactively.

Collaborating with parents, school staff, and community resources ensures a collective effort to address these issues effectively, fostering a compassionate and respectful school community where all students feel valued and protected.

Bullying: Bullying at secondary school can involve verbal, physical, or cyber aggression, including name-calling, teasing, spreading rumours, physical intimidation, or online harassment.

Prejudice and Discrimination: Bullying may be motivated by prejudice and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or other characteristics, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and biases.

Unhealthy Relationships: Unhealthy relationships may be characterized by controlling behaviours, possessiveness, jealousy, emotional manipulation, and isolating the partner from friends and family.

Gender Violence: Gender-based violence can manifest as sexual harassment, unwanted advances, physical violence, or emotional abuse, targeting individuals based on their gender or perceived gender roles.

Disrespectful Behaviour: Disrespectful behaviour encompasses using offensive language, derogatory remarks, or prejudiced attitudes towards others based on their appearance, weight, health, neurodiversity, age, or other characteristics.

Power Imbalance: Bullying, gender violence, and unhealthy relationships often involve a power imbalance, where the perpetrator exerts control and dominance over the victim.

Impact on Mental Health: These behaviours can have severe consequences on the mental health and well-being of the targeted individuals, leading to anxiety, depression, self-esteem issues, and social withdrawal.

Incorporating activities and discussions that celebrate diversity and address any potential biases fosters mutual understanding and respect.

By creating a safe space for open dialogue and acknowledging students’ perspectives and experiences, teachers can empower students to express themselves confidently and engage in respectful interactions, ultimately nurturing a cooperative and harmonious school community.
C. Addressing gender-based discrimination and harassment in the school environment

Addressing gender-based discrimination and harassment in the school environment requires a comprehensive and proactive approach.

This involves implementing clear policies that explicitly condemn all forms of discrimination and harassment based on gender, ensuring a safe space for all students, enabling them to challenge gender biases at school.

Conducting regular training and workshops for both students and staff to raise awareness about gender equality, consent, and respectful communication fosters a culture of inclusivity and respect.

Encouraging open dialogue and active listening allows students to express their concerns and experiences, enabling the school to respond promptly and supportively to any incidents. Addressing LGBTQ+ issues and promoting acceptance and understanding.

Collaborating with parents and community resources strengthens the collective effort to create a school environment that values gender equality, empowers all students, and ensures that every member of the school community feels respected, valued, and safe.

D. Creating an inclusive and supportive school environment for all students

Creating an inclusive and supportive school environment for all students is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and promoting their overall well-being. This involves embracing diversity and celebrating individual differences, ensuring that every student feels accepted and valued.

Implementing anti-discrimination policies and promoting respectful behaviour across the school community sets clear expectations for all members. Providing access to resources and support services for students with different needs or backgrounds helps remove barriers to learning and participation. Empowering students to actively engage in creating an inclusive culture through clubs, awareness campaigns, and student-led initiatives nurtures a sense of ownership and responsibility.

By cultivating empathy, understanding, and open communication among students and staff, the school environment becomes a safe and nurturing space where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

D1. Role play activity idea

Objective: To engage secondary school students in a role-playing activity to explore and model respectful behaviour in various scenarios.

Instructions: Divide students into small groups and provide each group with a different scenario involving interactions among peers or with teachers.

Examples: Resolving a disagreement, offering help to a struggling classmate, receiving constructive feedback, expressing gratitude, or standing up against bullying or discrimination.

Activity: Assign roles to students within each group, such as the person demonstrating respectful behaviour, the person initiating the interaction, and any bystanders. Encourage students to discuss and plan their role-play, focusing on how to communicate respectfully, use positive body language, and actively listen to each other. Allow time for each group to perform their role-play in front of the class. After each performance, facilitate a brief discussion to reflect on the demonstrated respectful behaviours and their impact on the situation.

Conclude the activity by summarizing the key aspects of respectful behaviour, emphasizing the importance of active listening, empathy, and kindness in fostering a positive and inclusive school environment. Encourage students to apply these principles in their daily interactions and be role models for others to follow.
Relationships At Home
A. Identifying positive communication patterns within families

**Active Listening:** Family members actively engage in conversations, show genuine interest in what others say, acknowledge they have heard and respond in a constructive way. Being present when others are speaking, and not thinking about something else.

**Open and Honest Expression:** There is a safe space for family members to express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns openly without fear of judgment or criticism. Members are allowed to ‘agree to disagree’, and do not feel pressured to say something they do not believe through fear of reproach.

**Empathy and Validation:** Family members demonstrate empathy by understanding and acknowledging each other’s emotions, providing support and validation. Members are allowed to feel and express a variety of emotions, and are able to accept others expressing their feelings and emotions too.

**Effective Conflict Resolution:** Positive communication involves resolving conflicts through calm and respectful discussions, active listening, seeking compromise and wanting to understand. Knowing that it’s OK to be wrong sometimes, learning to apologise or accept an apology. Feeling confident to give and accept feedback from others.

**Collaborative Decision Making:** Family members engage in collaborative decision-making processes, involving everyone’s input and considering different perspectives.

**Celebration of Achievements:** Positive communication patterns include celebrating each other’s accomplishments and showing pride and support in each other’s endeavours.

A1. Question ideas

• What makes up a healthy family relationship dynamic?
• Why is communication important in relationships?
• What is positive communication?

B. Exploring the impact of gender on family dynamics

**Gender Roles and Expectations:** Traditional gender roles may influence family dynamics, shaping expectations around caregiving, household responsibilities, and decision-making.

**Communication Styles:** Gender can sometimes influence communication styles within families, with differences in how emotions are expressed or conflicts are approached.

**Power and Authority:** Gender dynamics may impact power distribution within the family, potentially influencing who holds decision-making authority.

**Division of Labour:** Gender can play a role in the division of labour, affecting how household chores, childcare, and other responsibilities are allocated among family members.

**Support and Emotional Expression:** Gender norms may influence how emotional support is given and received within the family, affecting how family members express care and understanding.

**Impact of Gender Stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes may affect individual family members’ aspirations, hobbies, and career choices, potentially shaping family interactions and expectations.

B1. Creative writing idea

Thinking about the topics above write a short story that illustrates a gender stereotype in a family, and something that happens that might change this dynamic.
C. Recognising Domestic Abuse

For students who do not have positive family relationship role modelling, learning to recognise what is not a healthy relationship is an essential way to understand family relationship dynamics. In most families these are often a mixture of some healthy traits and some unhealthy ones.

**Domestic Abuse:** Domestic abuse is defined as any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality. Domestic abuse can manifest as physical, emotional, psychological, financial and sexual abuse.

**Coercive and Controlling Behaviour:** Isolation is used to deprive the abused of their social support system, increase dependence and fear. Exhaustion is encouraged to weaken the mental and physical ability of the victim to resist. Humiliation and degradation heightens feelings of incompetence and reinforces the fear of the consequences of not co-operating. Twisting reality and gaslighting making a person question their sanity. Trivial demands to develop a habit of compliance, a form of ‘training’. Threats to cultivate anxiety and despair, the fear instilled can do a large amount of emotional damage. Ultimate displays of power to demonstrate that resistance is futile. Occasional kindness to provide the motivation for compliance, after abuse there is a honeymoon stage with promises of change and hoping for the best. (include illustration of Albert Biderman’s Chart of Coercion which explored the brainwashing of prisoners of war from North Korea and China which covers these items)

**Cycle of Violence:** Domestic abuse typically follows a cycle, with phases of tension-building, acute violence, and honeymoon periods, making it difficult for victims to break free. ‘Trauma bonding’ can occur as the result of ongoing cycles of abuse. This is characterised by a longing to get back to an abusive partner, inability to detach from the relationship, or feeling that there is no way out of a relationship.

**Barriers to Reporting:** Victims may face various barriers, such as fear of retaliation, financial dependence, cultural stigma, and lack of supportive resources, which all hinder their ability to report the abuse.

**Impact on Victims:** Survivors of domestic abuse often suffer from physical injuries, emotional damage and psychological trauma, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, self-doubt, anger, irritability, low mood, dominating negative thinking, and loss of identity.

**Impact on Children and Young People:** Children and young people will learn relationship values and skills from parents, and so can perpetuate abuse in adulthood. While in an abusive family they can present challenging behaviour, antisocial behaviour, lying, disrespecting rules, shyness and ‘becoming invisible’, eating disorders, self-harm, lack of self-esteem, speech and language delay or difficulties, mental health issues, bullying or being bullied, lack of emotion, bedwetting, difficulties forming relationships, fear and phobias, careless and dangerous behaviour, lack of respect for their body, lack of boundaries, loss of identity, excessive use of drugs and alcohol, and copying the abusive behaviour. Children who are exposed to domestic violence can feel many negative primary emotions – guilt, shame, grief, confusion, fear, sadness – all of which may present as anger.

In abusive households, children can sometimes take on “roles” in order to protect themselves from emotional or physical harm. Some examples are:

- **The Problem Child** acts up at home and/or school. They may be diagnosed with behavioural issues and are difficult, if not impossible, to manage.
- **The Protector** feels like they have to protect the victim and will miss school to ensure they are home to keep them safe.
- **The Peacekeeper** tries to calm situations down, they become the negotiator and they want to fix problems.
- **The Copycat** becomes abusive too. They may bully, become violent and disrespectful.
- **The Star Pupil** tries to make everyone happy to try to stop the fighting. They are usually very well behaved, excel at school and appear on the surface not to be impacted by what is going on at home.
- **The Scapegoat** takes the blame for the abuse; this might be because they feel it is their fault or because they are told it is.
- **The Invisible** stays quiet and hides from the abuse, they may be withdrawn and much quieter than it is expected for children to be.
- **The Informer** seeks to gain approval. They are praised for passing on information.

**Prevention and Support:** Combating domestic abuse requires community awareness, education, and the provision of safe spaces and support services for victims to seek help and healing.
D. Promoting equality and respect

Equipping young people with the skills and understanding they need to develop equality and respect in their own relationships is an essential part of their education. To re-enforce the positive communication patterns needed within families, in schools we can support young people with the following:

**Promote Open Communication:** Encouraging open communication, and active listening to each other’s thoughts, feelings, and perspectives without judgment.

**Model Respectful Behaviour:** Demonstrate respectful behaviour towards each other and other community members, setting a positive example.

**Establish Clear Expectations and Boundaries:** Set clear expectations for behaviour and responsibilities, ensuring fairness and equal opportunities for everyone. Set clear boundaries and expectations for how to manage personal needs.

**Foster Empathy and Understanding:** Show empathy and understanding, helping young people to put themselves in each other’s shoes and recognize each other’s feelings and experiences.

**Address Gender Stereotypes:** Challenge and discuss gender stereotypes, encouraging individual interests and aspirations regardless of traditional gender norms.

**Encourage Equal Participation:** Involve young people in decision-making processes and responsibilities, allowing everyone to contribute and be empowered to have their say.

**Resolve Conflicts Peacefully:** Teach conflict resolution skills, promoting constructive discussions and finding solutions together, emphasizing compromise and understanding.

**Celebrate Diversity:** Embrace and celebrate the diversity of each of us, recognizing and appreciating our unique qualities and contributions.

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D1. Activity idea

**Objective:** Spoken Word Debate

**Instructions:** Divide the class into groups of 5 and give them each a task to write a short verse on one of the topics in this section.

- 5 minutes as a group to write down as many words about this topic.
- 5 minutes to choose the top 6 words.
- 20 minutes to write a short verse, rhyming or non rhyming and perform it together for the rest of the group.
Online Relationships
A. Understanding Online Relationships

The digital age has significantly transformed the dynamics of forming connections, presenting both opportunities and challenges. These have an impact on the expectations and experience of relationships in the face-to-face world. Some key dynamics and complexities include:

**Global Cultural Exchange:** With the rapid rise of social media and online platforms, we can connect globally. We can interact with people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, fostering broader perspectives and understanding.

**Accessibility and Convenience:** Easy access to communication tools can be particularly helpful for those who might face limitations due to distance, physical disabilities, or social anxiety.

**Support Networks:** Online relationships can serve as vital support networks, especially for individuals facing challenges such as mental health issues, bullying, or identity exploration.

**Expression and Self-Discovery:** Online spaces offer a sense of anonymity that can encourage self-expression and exploration of identities. This freedom allows young people to discover and embrace aspects of themselves without fear of immediate judgment, facilitating personal growth and self-awareness.

**Fun and Play:** Many online relationships revolve around having fun and play. Online game communities can open the possibilities of community playing, co-operation, collaboration, and companionship. These can be a lifeline to children in isolated places or circumstances, and can offer the opportunity to learn a wide array of relationship skills, as well as an opportunity to laugh, have fun, and put their troubles aside for a time.

It's important to note that while online relationships offer these benefits, young individuals should be educated about online safety, privacy, and the importance of maintaining healthy boundaries in their digital interactions. Encouraging a balance between online and offline connections is important for their overall wellbeing and social development.

Some of the concerns that people have of online relationships are:

**Instant Gratification:** Technology enables immediate responses and can lead to a demand for constant availability, this may impact patience and privacy, as well as sleep and well-being.

**Social Comparison:** In the digital world, individuals often present carefully curated versions of themselves, emphasizing the positive aspects and concealing vulnerabilities. Continuous exposure to others' seemingly perfect lives on social media may lead to social comparison and feelings of inadequacy, affecting self-esteem.

**Cyberbullying and Harassment:** The digital age has also given rise to cyberbullying and online harassment, which can harm individuals emotionally and psychologically.

**Privacy Concerns:** Sharing personal information online can lead to privacy and security risks. There also concerns of grooming and access to age inappropriate information.

**Digital Overload:** Constant exposure to screens and digital devices may lead to information overload and overwhelm.

Overall, forming connections in the digital age requires a balance between leveraging the benefits of technology while navigating its complexities and being mindful of maintaining genuine, respectful, and meaningful interactions.

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C1. Question ideas

- What have you learnt from online platforms?
- What have you learnt about relating with others online through gaming?
- What is your favourite online platform and why?
- How do people present differently online to in real life?
Consent and Boundaries
A. Consent and boundaries

Defining Consent: Consent is the explicit and voluntary agreement to engage in any form of physical, emotional, or intimate interaction, given freely and without coercion or pressure.

Defining Boundaries: Boundaries refer to the personal limits, values, and expectations that individuals establish to safeguard their emotional, physical, and mental well-being. These boundaries serve as guidelines for communication, intimacy, and decision-making, ensuring mutual respect and fostering a healthy and balanced partnership.

Importance of Consent in All Relationships: Teaching the importance of consent in all relationships emphasizes the necessity of mutual respect, boundaries, and communication to establish healthy connections.

Role of Consent in Romantic Relationships: Understanding consent's significance in romantic relationships highlights the need for ongoing communication, respecting each other's boundaries, and obtaining explicit consent for any intimate activity.

Establishing and Communicating Boundaries: Educating students on how to establish and communicate boundaries helps empower them to express their limits clearly and confidently in all relationships.

Consent, Respect, and Gender: Discussing the connection between consent, respect, and gender promotes an understanding of how traditional gender roles and stereotypes can impact communication and power dynamics in relationships.

Addressing Dating Violence and Unhealthy Relationships: Raising awareness about dating violence and unhealthy relationships enables students to recognize signs of abuse and seek support for themselves or others.

Gender, Intimacy, and Sexual Relationships: Understanding the role of gender in intimacy and sexual relationships explores how societal expectations and gender dynamics can influence consent and communication.

Recognizing Signs of Dating Violence: Equipping students to recognize signs of dating violence, such as controlling behaviours or emotional manipulation, empowers them to respond and seek help when needed.

Empowering Students to Seek Help: Encouraging students to seek help and support for themselves or others who may be experiencing unhealthy relationships or dating violence fosters a culture of empathy, care, and intervention.

A1. Activity: The Art of Saying ‘No’

Objective: To empower teenagers to confidently say ‘no’ in various relationships while respecting themselves and others.

Instructions: Start the activity by discussing the challenges teenagers may face in saying ‘no’ to peers, friends, family, or romantic partners. Divide the students into small groups and provide each group with different scenarios where saying ‘no’ is necessary. Examples include declining an invitation to a party, refusing to engage in risky behaviours, or declining unwanted advances. In their groups, students role-play these scenarios, practicing how to assertively and respectfully say ‘no.’ Encourage them to use ‘I’ statements and maintain positive body language.

Discussion: After the role-plays, bring the groups back together for a larger discussion. Ask students to share their experiences and insights on how they felt during the role-play and any challenges they encountered. Facilitate a brainstorming session where students come up with different ways to say ‘no’ in a firm yet considerate manner. Discuss the importance of being honest and clear while respecting the other person’s feelings.

Conclude: the activity by emphasizing that saying ‘no’ is an essential skill that empowers individuals to set boundaries and make choices that align with their values and well-being. Encourage students to practice saying ‘no’ in different situations and reassure them that it’s okay to prioritize their comfort and safety.
B. Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) among young people, particularly adolescents, is a concerning issue with various forms and underlying causes:

**Dating Violence:** Adolescents may experience dating violence, including physical, emotional, or sexual abuse within relationships. This can stem from power imbalances, jealousy, or control issues.

**Bullying and Harassment:** Gender-based bullying and harassment, such as cyberbullying or in-person harassment based on gender identity or sexual orientation, are prevalent among young people and can have severe psychological impacts.

**Forced or Early Marriages:** In some cultures or communities, young girls, in particular, may face forced or early marriages, impacting their health, education, and personal development.

**Sexual Violence:** Sexual violence against young people, including rape, sexual assault, or coercion, is a significant issue. It can occur within relationships, by acquaintances, or in social settings, leading to trauma and long-term psychological consequences.

**Online Gender-based Violence:** With the rise of social media, young people, especially girls and LGBTQ+ individuals, are susceptible to online harassment, cyberstalking, or threats that target their gender or sexual orientation.

**Harmful Gender Stereotypes:** Gender norms and stereotypes perpetuated by society contribute to the normalization of violence. These stereotypes can pressure young people to conform to traditional gender roles, leading to unequal power dynamics and justifying abusive behavior.

Addressing gender-based violence among young people requires multifaceted approaches:

**Education and Awareness:** Comprehensive sex education programs that incorporate discussions on consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality are essential in preventing GBV.

**Support Services:** Accessible and youth-friendly support services, including counseling, hotlines, and safe spaces, are crucial for survivors of gender-based violence to seek help and support.

**Empowerment and Advocacy:** Encouraging young people to challenge harmful gender norms, promote respectful behavior, and advocate for their rights helps create a culture of gender equality and respect.

**Legal and Policy Frameworks:** Implementing and enforcing laws and policies that protect young people from all forms of gender-based violence is crucial for prevention and prosecution of perpetrators.

Promoting a society that values gender equality, respect, and healthy relationships is fundamental in addressing and preventing gender-based violence among young people. This involves efforts from families, schools, communities, governments, and civil society organizations working collectively to create safer environments for all young individuals.

B1. Activity: Reporting gender-based violence

• Is GBV always reported?
• What would make it hard for someone to report?
• How and when should it be reported?
• Is GBV only committed against women?
C. Self-esteem

Self-esteem can be profoundly influenced by relationships, serving as both a bolstering force and a potential source of detriment. In healthy relationships, where mutual respect, trust, and open communication prevail, individuals often experience an uplifting effect on their self-esteem. These connections offer a supportive environment, fostering a sense of worth, validation, and empowerment. Establishing and respecting boundaries, alongside the acknowledgment of consent, further solidifies a healthy dynamic, reinforcing individual agency and self-worth.

Conversely, unhealthy relationships can significantly damage self-esteem. When boundaries are disregarded, consent is ignored, or violence—be it physical, emotional, or psychological—enters the equation, individuals often endure profound emotional scars. In such toxic environments, self-worth erodes as individuals may feel diminished, manipulated, or devalued. The absence of respect and the imposition of control can lead to a detrimental impact on one's perception of self, resulting in feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and diminished confidence.

Ultimately, the nature of relationships significantly shapes one's self-esteem. Healthy relationships can serve as a cornerstone for fostering a positive sense of self, while unhealthy dynamics have the potential to inflict lasting damage, emphasizing the critical importance of establishing and maintaining respectful, consensual, and violence-free connections.

C1. Activity ideas

- Healthy relationship
- Communication
- Sharing
- Equality
- Feeling safe
- Compliments
- Love

Regarding the list above, discuss the characteristics of a healthy relationship, can we elaborate on this list and describe situations where these might be evidenced.

C2. Activity ideas

- Unhealthy Relationship
- Control
- Jealousy
- Blame
- Dependency
- Threatened
- Compromise

Regarding the list above, discuss the characteristics of an unhealthy relationship, can we elaborate on this list and describe situations where these might be evidenced.
Media and Cultural Influences
A. Analysing Media and Cultural Influences on Relationships, Gender and Sexuality

Analysing Media and Cultural Influences: Encourage students to examine how media and cultural representations shape their perceptions of relationships, gender and sexuality. Raise awareness of the impact of external influences on their beliefs and behaviours.

Examining Media Representations: Engage students in a critical examination of media portrayals of relationships, gender roles, identity and sexuality, including movies, advertisements, TV shows, influencers and social media content, to understand the underlying messages and values conveyed.

Identifying Harmful Stereotypes: Promote discussions on harmful stereotypes perpetuated by media and influencers, such as ‘toxic masculinity’, ‘feminazi’, gender ‘norms’, and idealized relationship expectations, to recognize their potential negative effects on individuals and society.

Cultivating Media Literacy Skills: Teach students media literacy skills, including evaluating sources, identifying bias, and recognizing persuasive techniques, to develop a discerning and critical approach towards media representations.

Encouraging Discussion and Reflection: Facilitate open discussions and reflective activities on how media influences shape perceptions and behaviours in relationships and gender dynamics, fostering a deeper understanding of personal values and beliefs.

Challenging Unhealthy Narratives: Empower students to challenge unhealthy narratives and promote positive representations of relationships and gender diversity in media, encouraging inclusivity and empathy.

Positive media and cultural influences wield considerable power in reshaping societal perspectives on relationships, gender, and sexuality. When media platforms, entertainment, and cultural expressions emphasize inclusivity and diversity, they serve as catalysts for change. Representation plays a pivotal role; authentic portrayals of diverse relationships, gender identities, and sexual orientations normalize differences, fostering empathy and acceptance. By showcasing a broad spectrum of identities, media cultivates a sense of validation and belonging among individuals who might otherwise feel marginalized.

These influences can act as educational tools, disseminating knowledge about consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality. Empowering role models portrayed in media empower young audiences to embrace their identities and advocate for equity and respect within relationships.

Cultural events, social media movements, and online communities amplify these positive narratives, creating supportive spaces for dialogue and activism. This synergy between media representation, cultural movements, and advocacy fuels societal dialogue and prompts legislative actions that promote equality and protect diverse identities.

In essence, positive media and cultural influences not only reflect societal values but also have the potential to redefine and mold them. By amplifying inclusive narratives, challenging stereotypes, and fostering awareness, these influences pave the way for a more equitable and understanding society for people of all genders and sexual orientations.

A1. Discussion ideas

- Should social media be regulated?
- What are the best or worst portrayals of gender that you have seen in the media?
- What stories would you like to see being told?
Statistics and the global perspective
A. Statistics and the global perspective - why we need change

Domestic Abuse: Globally, approximately 1 in 3 women experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime. In some regions, up to 70% of women have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner. Domestic abuse affects men as well, with around 1 in 4 men experiencing some form of physical violence from an intimate partner. Globally 1 woman will die every 11 minutes as a result of intimate partner violence or abuse. 64% of domestic abuse cases can be prevented by intervention.

Domestic Abuse Impact on Children: Children exposed to domestic abuse are more likely to experience behavioural problems, trauma, and long-term emotional difficulties. Globally, an estimated 275 million children are exposed to domestic violence in their homes.

Gender-Based Violence: Gender-based violence transcends borders and cultures, affecting millions of individuals worldwide. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, experiencing higher rates of violence, including sexual harassment, assault, and trafficking. Globally, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced marriage continue to impact the lives of countless women and girls.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is a growing concern with the rise of digital connectivity and social media platforms. About 1 in 3 young people have experienced cyberbullying at some point in their lives. Cyberbullying can lead to severe emotional distress, anxiety, and even suicidal tendencies among victims.

Global Perspectives on Reporting: A significant number of domestic abuse, gender violence incidents and cyberbullying go unreported due to fear, stigma, and lack of trust in authorities. In some countries, legal and social barriers discourage victims from seeking help or justice.

Cultural Norms and Attitudes: Deep-rooted cultural norms and attitudes often perpetuate domestic abuse and gender violence, hindering progress towards eradication. Challenging harmful cultural norms is essential for promoting gender equality and ending violence.

Economic Impact: Domestic abuse and gender violence have substantial economic repercussions, affecting productivity, healthcare costs, and legal expenses. In the United States alone, the economic impact of domestic violence exceeds $8 billion annually.

Regional Disparities: Domestic abuse, gender violence, and cyberbullying prevalence can vary significantly across regions, with some areas experiencing higher rates than others. Socioeconomic factors, education, and cultural practices contribute to these disparities.

A1. Activity ideas

• Group discussion about the statistics.
• Additional research about one or more areas.
Role Models and Positive Influences
A. Role Models and Positive Influences

Role models and positive influences play a pivotal role in fostering an understanding of healthy relationships.

By examining historical and contemporary figures who promote healthy connections, students can learn valuable insights about effective communication, empathy, and mutual respect.

These role models serve as beacons of inspiration, illustrating the significance of nurturing meaningful and supportive relationships that transcend traditional gender roles.

Learning from the experiences of individuals who have advocated for equality and respect in their personal and professional lives empowers students to prioritize these values in their own relationships, contributing to a more compassionate and harmonious society.

Positive role models who challenge gender norms serve as powerful examples of breaking free from limiting stereotypes. By celebrating and learning from these figures, students can embrace the idea that gender should not confine their aspirations or dictate their roles in relationships.

Emphasizing the importance of respect for diverse gender identities and roles, students can develop empathy and understanding, fostering an inclusive environment that accepts and celebrates the uniqueness of each individual.

Ultimately, positive role models who challenge gender norms inspire students to create relationships based on authenticity, respect, and the recognition of everyone’s inherent worth.

A1. Activity ideas

- Research positive relationship role models.
Conclusion

Our collective effort as educators in fostering healthy relationships and respect for gender will undoubtedly shape the future of our society. We hope this resource equips you, the teachers, with the knowledge and tools to support your students through their formative years. Together, let us build a community that embraces empathy, inclusivity, and mutual respect, preparing our teenagers for a lifetime of meaningful connections and positive contributions to the world around them.

Positive Communication and Conflict Resolution:
- Encourage active listening and empathy to understand others’ perspectives and emotions.
- Promote open and honest communication to foster trust and mutual respect.
- Teach assertiveness skills to express needs and emotions in a constructive manner.
- Cultivate a culture of non-judgmental communication that values diverse viewpoints.

Effective Communication Skills for Expressing Emotions and Needs:
- Teach students to identify and articulate their emotions to better express their needs.
- Encourage the use of “I” statements to take ownership of emotions and communicate feelings.
- Provide opportunities for role-playing and practice in expressing emotions and needs effectively.

Understanding the Impact of Language and Tone on Relationships:
- Discuss the power of language and tone in shaping perceptions and emotions.
- Emphasize the importance of respectful and positive language in communication.
- Explore how different tones can affect the message’s reception and emotional impact.

Conflict Resolution Strategies that Uphold Respect for Gender:
- Address gender stereotypes and biases in conflict resolution discussions.
- Promote strategies that focus on collaboration and understanding rather than competition.
- Encourage students to challenge traditional gender norms in conflict resolution and foster equality.

Empathy and Compassion:
- Encourage students to actively listen and understand others’ feelings and experiences.
- Incorporate empathy-building activities and discussions to foster a culture of compassion.
- Model empathetic behaviour as teachers and adults, leading by example.

Empathy Towards Diverse Experiences Related to Gender:
- Discuss the importance of recognizing and respecting diverse gender identities and experiences.
- Educate students about the challenges faced by individuals with different gender expressions.
- Create a safe space for open dialogue and empathy-building exercises to promote understanding.

Students to be Allies and Advocates for Each Other:
- Promote the concept of being allies and advocates for peers, irrespective of gender.
- Encourage students to speak up against discrimination and support those who face challenges.
- Teach the importance of standing up for inclusivity and equality within the school community.

Positive Self-esteem and Body Image for All Genders:
- Implement programs and activities that promote positive body image and self-esteem for all students.
- Foster an environment that values inner qualities and personal achievements over appearance.
- Challenge societal beauty standards and encourage self-acceptance and self-love.
Resources and Support

The work of the SSF so far

We will be holding CPD session for educators to work through this resource pack, they are free to attend and accessible online.

The Foundation has developed other resources which you may find useful and are listed here. All our resources can be found on our website: https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/resources

- Creating Change: the world I want to live in. Resource to explore Human Rights
- Bereavement and Loss resource
- My Life Changed: storytelling resource pack
- Storytelling Workbook

Recommended videos, and online resources

The resources below are for use with both primary and secondary students. We think all of these resources are useful for students and adults to gain more knowledge about relationships. Teachers will identify the suitability of the resources to use in their context as they have the best knowledge of their students ability and prior knowledge.

- https://www.nspcc.org.uk/support-us/listen-up-speak-up/
- https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/about-us-new/
- https://agendaonline.co.uk/welcome/
- https://everyfuturefoundation.co.uk/

Recommended books

- What does LGBT Mean? A guide for young people (and grown ups) - Olly Pike
- How to Find a Rainbow - Alom Shaha (illus. Sarthak Sinha)

Trauma Informed Schools provide training and support to schools and have lots of resources on their website: www.traumainformedschools.co.uk
- Book: Helping Teenagers Talk about their Lives

Guidance for accessing professional support when needed

Let students know that there are people and organizations who are ready to help those who experience domestic abuse.

Share resources available in your country or community, such as helplines or organizations that support victims. What kind of support is there for children in your area?

Childline is a national organisation in the UK for example, which children can call for advice or just to talk to someone. They have lots of resources on their website too, covering current issues such as climate change and war which might be affecting children and young people: https://www.childline.org.uk/

School policies and procedures for handling relationship-related issues

You will know best where to go to find out more about school policies, procedures and people locally who can help in your school.

Be Available for Questions: after sharing this information, create a safe space for children to ask questions and share their feelings. Answer their questions honestly, but in a way that is appropriate for their age level.

Legislative Measures and Interventions:

Many countries have implemented laws and policies to address domestic abuse and gender violence; however, enforcement and implementation challenges persist.

Awareness campaigns, support services, and educational initiatives play crucial roles in combating these issues.

International organizations, such as the United Nations, have dedicated efforts to raise awareness and combat domestic abuse, gender violence, and cyberbullying.
Collaborative initiatives aim to create a safer and more equitable world for all, with specific attention to vulnerable populations.

DA needs to go on the Global Agenda/Youth Agenda for cultural change with an emphasis on Prevention.

**Resources for further learning on healthy relationships and gender**


The NO MORE CAMPAIGN [https://nomore.org/](https://nomore.org/) to stop gender-based violence. They have partnered with Uber to give free rides to refuges. Created safe spaces in pharmacies and also at HSBC and TSB banks.

A success story comes from Rwanda – where a large portion of the National Government are women. There has been a whole community response. They have created a 'Isange One Stop Centre' that takes a holistic approach to sexual and gender-based violence - where Men call out Men and there are no bystanders [https://darp.gov.in/sites/default/files/Rwanda.pdf](https://darp.gov.in/sites/default/files/Rwanda.pdf)

Hestia (the Greek goddess of the hearth and chief goddess of domestic activity) along with the No more campaign facilitate life beyond crisis. And have developed The Bright Sky App - Bright Sky is a safe, easy to use app and website that provides practical support and information on how to respond to domestic abuse. It is for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or who is worried about someone else.

Let Me Know #LMK – Young Camden Foundation and one love foundation. Prevention programme against domestic violence, relationship abuse and sexual assault that equips young people to have healthy relationships during their teen years and also embeds behaviours and expectations that are carried through into adult life.

[https://agendaonline.co.uk/welcome/](https://agendaonline.co.uk/welcome/)


Life Lessons – Watch Discuss and Make videos of young adults [https://www.lifelessons.co.uk/products](https://www.lifelessons.co.uk/products)

Public Health England have a great set of resources aimed at people to work through themselves. [https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/resources/relationships-lesson-plan-pack#-text-Learning%20outcomes&text-recognise%20the%20qualities%20and%20signs%20others%20are%20experiencing%20abusive%20behaviours](https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/resources/relationships-lesson-plan-pack#-text-Learning%20outcomes&text-recognise%20the%20qualities%20and%20signs%20others%20are%20experiencing%20abusive%20behaviours)


Teaching about consent [https://pshe-association.org.uk/consent](https://pshe-association.org.uk/consent)

Stonewall - Different Families, Same Love pack [https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/different-families-same-love-pack](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/different-families-same-love-pack)

Every Mind Matters resources to support you by providing simple, practical advice for a healthier mind [https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/topics/mental-wellbeing/resources](https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/topics/mental-wellbeing/resources)


Thank you to everyone who has worked with us to develop this resource. We hope you find it useful.

This resource is a first step in making the space to safely discuss relationships with students. Please share your adaptations to the resource and the exercises that work for you with your students. Please also send us resources that you have used, which we can share with other educators to keep the resource updated.

We welcome your feedback.

If you have any questions or feedback you wish to share; please email: admin@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk

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Instagram
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