



Respectful Futures

Shaping Healthy Relationships

Facilitation Guide

Introduction

Much of our success and happiness is determined by how we interact with others, in particular, our friends and colleagues, our family, and our teachers. When these relationships are healthy, we sense that we are accepted, and feel secure and happy. When our relationships are unhealthy, we may feel unfairly judged, insecure, anxious, or sad. Our energy goes into trying to gain acceptance and security, rather than in becoming who we might be and enjoying life. We all need to learn what healthy relationships look, feel, and sound like. We also need to learn the skills required for developing relationships that will sustain and empower us throughout our lives.

Resources for Respectful Futures Program

This facilitation guide is the companion to resources developed by Stroh Health Care in collaboration with the British Columbia Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and the Ministry of Education. Those resources, in turn, were modelled on a program called *Respectful Relationships* developed by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, which has been used with great success in educating men who have been convicted on domestic abuse charges. The principles underlying that program are based on concepts shared by a variety of programs devoted to improving interpersonal relationships.

Development of Resources

The *Respectful Futures* resources consist of six modules, which may be used in schools and the community, and which were developed in collaboration with educators and those who work on the frontlines with victims and perpetrators of domestic and relationship abuse.

An advisory committee provided input from these sectors:

- BC Teachers' Federation
- Federation of Independent School Associations of BC
- BC School Superintendents Association
- BC Principals' and Vice Principals' Association
- First Nations Education Steering Committee
- BC Corrections
- Youth Justice
- Abbotsford Family Services

- Ending Violence Association of BC
- RCMP Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Their input has helped ensure that the program materials are current, based on best available data and research, age/grade appropriate, and focused upon prevention and early intervention.

The draft materials were circulated for feedback to the organizations represented on the advisory committee. The results of this consultation and development process are reflected in the resources provided here.

Overview of Modules

The modules are presented in a progression that allows younger students to address relationships in a more global way, while giving older students opportunities for a more specific and focused examination of relationships. Schools or districts may adopt *Respectful Futures* as a program that will be implemented over time, with the various modules being used at the appropriate age or grade level. Each teacher will, however, be able to use particular modules if their content is pertinent to a situation that has emerged in the school or community. For example, certain modules may be selected to help address an instance of serious bullying, physical abuse, or sexual violence. While the modules are designed to flow from one topic to the next, they may also be used as stand-alone learning experiences when necessary.

Here is a list of the modules:

	Title	Summary
1	Characteristics of Healthy Relationships	This module is foundational to all that will follow. It begins by inviting students into a conversation about relationships from their perspectives. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a definition of “relationship” that talks about connection, friendship, respect, responsibility, and safety • Exploring a simple model called Me+You+Us, which gives students a framework and a way to talk about healthy relationships
2	Links between Thinking, Feeling, and Behaviour	This module focuses on the connection between how we think, feel, and behave, and highlights the fact that in all situations, we have power and choice. It introduces the ABCDE Model as a tool for understanding these connections.

	Title	Summary
3	Building Better Relationships through Better Communication	This module explains why communication is more than just talking, and listening is more than just waiting for your turn to talk. It refers back to Module 2, viewing communication from the perspective of the ABCDE Model. Module 3 helps students recognize that how we respond in a situation will affect its outcome.
4	Understanding and Managing Anger	This module helps students understand that anger in and of itself is not a problem. Anger is simply an emotional response to something that has had an impact on us. If we examine what is going on for us in a particular situation, anger can help us identify underlying primary feelings, such as fear or sadness. Module 4 provides tools for managing anger in respectful ways.
5	Understanding the Impacts of Unhealthy Relationships	This module highlights the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships. It explores jealousy and how it can erode a relationship. It also provides opportunities for students to analyze and improve how they behave with others.
6	How to Develop and Sustain Healthy Relationships	This module empowers students to understand and engage in healthy relationships through building an understanding of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-compassion. It reiterates the fact that in these relationships, the persons involved are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for their own happiness • Able to set and maintain healthy flexible boundaries • Able to recognize that each individual has a right and responsibility to represent their authentic self

Each module is presented within a framework consisting of:

- An abstract
- Big ideas
- Learning outcomes
- Facilitation notes, which provide background information
- A list of learning activities and resources
- Exercises for student participation

- Replay/assessment activities
- A concluding statement that connects each module to the next one

Teachers may use any or all of these activities depending on the age of their students and their particular situation and context. The principles for building and maintaining healthy relationships are the same regardless of the students' age or grade level, but the activities and resources used to initiate conversations on these topics may differ for each group. Teachers will provide context appropriate for the maturity of their students.

What the Modules Are Not

The *Respectful Futures* modules focus on helping youth to understand and form respectful relationships. They are not intended to be used entirely as an anti-bullying program or as a program focused on safe use of the Internet. However, the ability to recognize and engage in respectful relationships is essential to combating bullying and responding effectively to hateful or hurtful posts on social media. As these issues do relate to the problem of unhealthy relationships, they can be incorporated into the modules during class discussions. As shown in the next section, there are many connections between respectful relationships and other aspects of the BC curriculum.

How the Modules Link up with the BC Curriculum

The *Respectful Futures* modules allow students to bring their own thoughts and experiences to the program. In this way, they align with the BC curriculum's focus on personalized learning. The modules highlight the individual as s/he interacts with others. In addition, these modules were developed with the BC curriculum's core competencies in mind. The modules build capacity in positive communication, critical thinking, and personal and social identity. These core competencies run through all courses and learning standards that form the K to 12 curriculum in BC.

Respectful Futures is also compatible with other programs offered in BC and adds its own content and perspective to theirs. In particular, *Respectful Futures* aligns philosophically with FRIENDS (an evidence-based anxiety prevention and resiliency program), E.R.A.S.E (Expect Respect and a Safe Education), and the training offered to teachers, counsellors, and principals through the E.R.A.S.E. program.

Principles

The modules were designed based on the following principles:

Evidence-Based Material

Stroh Health Care undertook a comprehensive research project to examine best understandings and best practice in the area of building healthy relationships. The data from this research informed the identification of these principles and the development of resources. Those who use the *Respectful Futures* modules will find links to summaries of this research and to the professional peer consultations and youth focus group feedback at www.RespectfulFutures.ca.

Non-Judgmental Approach

One of the major principles underpinning these modules is that of suspending judgment and refraining from shaming or blaming any group or party. The *Respectful Relationships Program* has demonstrated that, when discussing serious issues such as domestic abuse with adults, it is critical to refrain from being judgmental. Abuse is a learned behavior that can be changed. To encourage openness to change, teachers or facilitators will need to refrain from blaming and shaming when they discuss these behaviours. They must instead model non-judgmental discourse.

Using a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Model, the modules raise awareness of how attitudes, beliefs, and values play a major role in the development of behaviours, whether respectful or disrespectful. Many adults participating in counselling programs for abusive behaviour indicate that learning to abuse began in their youth. The premise of CBT is that by looking for the good in individuals and providing them with new and healthy ways to interact with others, we are more likely to effect positive change in their lives and in ours.

Here are some comments from participants in the *Respectful Relationships Program*:

- “I am more fully myself, communicate with more honesty, more kindness, more truth. She likes that I am softer on me and on her.”
- “I can handle stressful situations better. I don’t get upset as often as I did before. I have more of a smile on my face.”
- “I wish someone had taught this to me earlier; it would have made a big difference in my life and relationship.”

The last comment – repeated often by participants – motivated Stroh Health Care to develop similar resources for students. The success of the *Respectful Relationships*

Program suggests that building understanding and skills goes a long way in helping people become positive partners in all types of relationships. While the men's feedback was drawn from the perspective of their intimate or romantic relationships, the learning that has taken place through that program provides a framework for a youth program on building healthy and respectful relationships of all types – romantic, family, collegial, friendship, etc.

The success of the *Respectful Relationships Program* results in great part from the care taken by facilitators in creating a safe and non-judgmental environment in which participants can learn about and change their feelings and behaviours. Teachers of the *Respectful Futures* modules are also encouraged to create a non-judgmental environment for their students. With all participants the goal is awareness, understanding, and skill development in establishing and nurturing healthy relationships as well as open discussions of disrespectful behaviours and more serious abuse. The materials were developed from a gender-neutral perspective and in a form relevant to relationships of all kinds: friendships, romantic, family, mainstream, LGBTQ2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited, and inclusion of all identities) youth as well as students in rural, urban, in-school, and out-of-school settings. Cultural sensitivity needs will vary by situation and location.

Age-Appropriate and Timely Information

Decisions about the best time or age to introduce a module will of course be situational and up to the individual teacher. However, practitioners in the field determined the progression of the modules so that the topics are introduced in a sequence that “scaffolds” ideas – building from one module to the next.

The developers heard from teachers and counsellors, as well as from the research, that children today are being introduced to disrespectful behaviours at much younger ages than in the past. They see and hear such behaviours from prominent personalities on TV, on social media, and in their daily lives. As adults, we may feel strongly that discussing such behaviours with children is wrong, but the reality is that keeping this information away from them could be more hurtful in the long run.

The alternative is to ensure that they are able to respond to such behaviours in ways that are respectful of others and keep interactions from escalating to unsafe levels – whether emotionally, physically, sexually, or intellectually.

Each module includes activities that can be adapted to particular age/grade levels. The decision to introduce a particular topic must be made sensitively, with regard for the age level of the group and its particular context. For example, not every

group will be ready to discuss consent in sexual relationships, and teachers may choose to leave this topic out if necessary. Educators are encouraged to work with experts in their schools, communities, and districts to determine when it would be helpful to use curriculum that addresses critical issues but also might exacerbate fears and trauma. Teachers must work with their school-based teams or sage schools coordinator to establish timing that would safeguard the best interests of their students.

Finally, districts and schools have policies in place regarding obtaining parental consent when materials of a sensitive nature are to be presented to children. Teachers are encouraged to work with their principals to ensure that such policies are followed.

Creation of Safe Environments

In many cases, the modules may lead students to bring up topics that may result in emotional responses. Measures for creating a safe and trusting environment therefore must be in place. Teachers should remind students that, if they find themselves responding or reacting emotionally to any topic or activity, they should seek out a trusted adult immediately, either within the school or at home.

During and after each module, students should also be monitored for noticeable changes in behaviour, including the following:

- Becoming easily agitated, emotional, and overly sensitive
- Experiencing difficulty sleeping or carrying out day-to-day activities
- Mentioning that the topics discussed are interfering with their other thoughts

Should any worrisome behaviours develop, the school counsellor should be contacted for support and resources.

Teacher as Role Model

On the surface, healthy relationships seem simply to work well. When we “peek under the hood,” however, to see what is supporting these relationships, we find that the following are almost always present:

- Honesty and openness
- Trust
- Patience
- Physical safety
- Emotional security
- Understanding and empathy

- Respect
- Efficacy
- Mutual support
- Loyalty

When considered within the teaching and learning paradigm, these characteristics can also be seen to apply to teachers' best interactions with students. As modelling is one of the most powerful tools in any learning situation, a teacher who models these characteristics for students will support both their growing understanding and the skill development needed to nurture mature and open relationships.

Students should feel free to express themselves without fear of reprisal, even when what is said is offensive to some people. The key is to respond respectfully in order to dig beneath the statement and help the student see a different point of view and move to a different way of thinking. Consider these examples:

Student: Girls are good only for cooking and cleaning. They are not as smart as boys.

Teacher (in a neutral tone): How did you come to this idea? What evidence suggests to you that this is true?

Or perhaps a response to an older student might be:

Teacher: I see. Girls are not as good as boys and work in menial tasks. I wonder how you might explain the fact that our previous premier was a woman. What are your thoughts?

This interaction may at first seem to be too tolerant of a statement that teachers would never wish to promote. By responding with curiosity rather than judgment, however, teachers can begin to unpack the reasoning behind the statement and find ways to encourage a different way of thinking. Those alternative ways will almost always be articulated by other students who will bring in new perspectives.

In almost all cases, hearing from peers who hold a different point of view is more powerful than receiving a pronouncement from a teacher. The articulation of different points of view gives the teacher an opportunity to explore these differences and invite students to inquire further into these varying understandings. Herein lies the basis for change and growth.

As teachers can attest, the school year is very full, and time for addressing healthy relationships directly may be limited. The program developers believe that skill development in areas such as active listening, neutral and non-judgmental

responding, metacognition, and conflict resolution is important. As teachers use these skills every day with their students, it may be wise to draw attention to how the skills are used in everyday communication with students, between students, and in videos or other materials to which students have access. In this way, skill development and learning become an integral part of the work done throughout the school year.

Group Size and Format

The six modules were designed and developed for use in a group format. However, they also work well in one-to-one situations. Teachers or administrators may use one module or an exercise from one module with an individual student or a group of students who might benefit from it. The six modules may be delivered in six sessions; however, the more time spent on the modules, the more students will take away from the experience. Some modules might engage youth more fully; in such cases, the material can be covered over more sessions.

Role of Counsellors

In many schools, the staff may decide that counsellors will be responsible for teaching the *Respectful Futures* modules, especially those that cover more sensitive and complex matters, such as dating and relationship violence. These topics may result in a traumatic response from students who have been affected directly or indirectly by unhealthy relationships. Working with such students may require more specialized skill than many classroom teachers possess.

In some schools, however, there may not be sufficient staff with the appropriate knowledge and skills to teach these modules. In these cases, it may be possible to request district level staff or community workers from the health and social services areas to assist.

Big Ideas

Big ideas underpin the setting of learner's goals and help to focus the work done by educators. They frame the hopes that educators have for the children and youth who engage with them in the examination of respectful and healthy relationships – what they will understand and what skills they will develop.

When considering the use of these modules, teachers will undoubtedly have already identified some big ideas, but the modules do provide some such ideas as

suggestions to be considered in planning. They are listed below in no particular order of priority.

- Personal happiness is determined to a great extent by our ability to form supportive, mutually respectful, and honest relationships with others.
- Conflict is a natural part of being in relationship with others; how we deal with conflict determines whether a relationship is positive or negative, healthy or unhealthy.
- Understanding our own emotional responses to stress and stressors is an important part of gaining control of our lives and maintaining healthy relationships.
- Communication is at the core of building strong relationships, and listening is at the core of communication.
- Developing a positive self-worth through acceptable avenues (e.g., academics, athletics, artistic talents, and social competence) can be a powerful force for eliminating the need to engage in unhealthy, disrespectful relationships.
- Learning to have more compassion for ourselves and others aids in the development of a mature and healthy self-esteem.

By engaging these or other big ideas, teachers and students can work together to develop strong and resilient citizens who are empowered to respect themselves, support others, and strengthen our society.

Assessment of Learning

When assessing student learning, it is helpful for teachers to have a good grasp of the big ideas that they have identified for their students. Students who can apply what they learned to new situations have successfully learned the materials. With this in mind, teachers can work out what particular knowledge, skills, and attitudes align with these big ideas and then focus on how each student demonstrates learning.

For example, in considering the Big Idea that “communication is at the core of building strong relationships, and listening is at the core of communication,” teachers may want to pay attention to growth in such areas as:

- Ability to allow others to speak without interruption
- Ability to listen to others without judgment
- Ability to articulate one’s needs without coercion or threat
- Ability to speak and respond to others in respectful and non-aggressive ways
- Ability to construct and ask difficult questions without implying blame or judgment

- Ability to recognize how one's communication style may have an impact on others

What other questions would you suggest?



We now live in a world that includes false news, “reality” TV that brings out the worst in relationships, celebrities who model harmful communication, and unmonitored Internet sites. There is a great need to support children and youth to recognize and practise a healthier and more respectful way of being in relationship with others. *Respectful Futures* is both the name of a resource and our shared vision.

We welcome your feedback about this program and the resources provided. Please visit www.Respectfulfutures.ca and let us know what you think.