



Middle School Engagement- Grade 6

Healthy Relationships & How to Cultivate Them

PREVENTION THROUGH EDUCATION IS THE SOLUTION

Connect for Freedom is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to providing free **online safety** and **human trafficking awareness** materials to education stakeholders.



Lesson



Healthy Relationships & How to Cultivate Them

Lesson Outline

1. Introduction to Teen Relationships
2. NCMEC “Healthy Relationships” Video (2 min.)
 - Discussion Questions
3. Take Time to Get to Know Each Other
4. DayOneNY “Don’t Confuse Love & Abuse” Video (2.5 min.)
 - Discussion Questions
5. Why Is It Hard to Leave?
6. The Dibble Institute Handout: Facts About Dating Violence
7. Activity

Teen Relationships

The Data



96% of teens report mental/emotional abuse in their dating relationships.

The Dibble Institute

1 in 11 students said they had been hit, slapped, or physically abused in the **past year**.

The Dibble Institute

28% of teens who have been in relationships are victims of **digital dating abuse**.

The Dibble Institute

Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship Online & Offline



You feel scared, unsafe, or threatened.

You feel manipulated or guilty often by your partner.

You feel pressured to agree to do something you don't want to do.

You feel disrespected during arguments with your partner.

You feel emotionally drained, insulted, or threatened during arguments.

You feel as though you are the only one to compromise.

Signs of a Healthy Relationship Online & Offline



You feel safe, loved, and cared for.

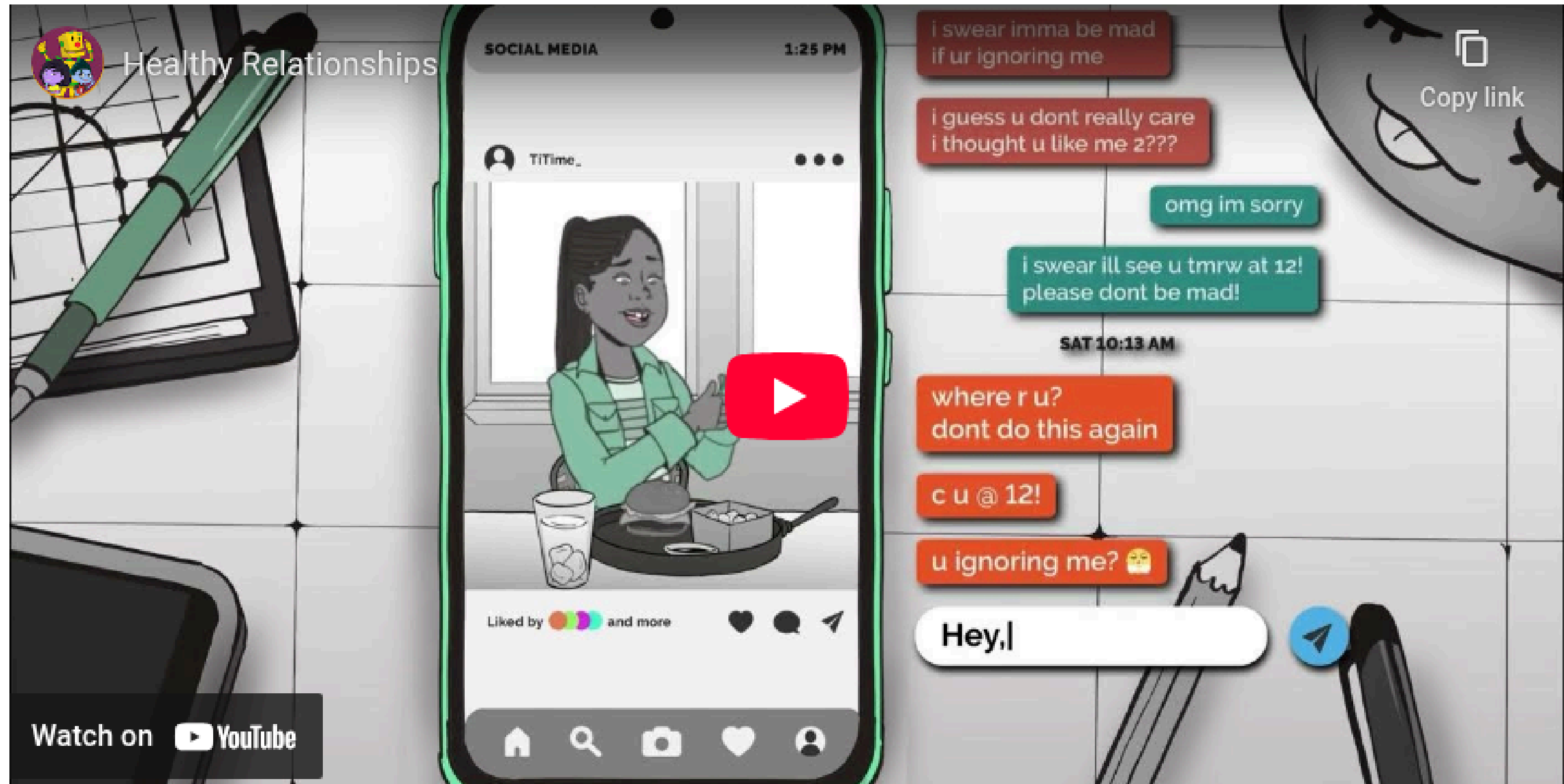
You have open and honest communication with your significant other.

You feel comfortable discussing your feelings with them.

Even if you disagree with your significant other, you both remain respectful.

You feel like an equal to your significant other.

NCMEC “Healthy Relationships” Video



Watch on  YouTube

Duration: 1:56 minutes

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldjZCvqhNWw&t=64s>

NCMEC “Healthy Relationships” Discussion Guide

*Click [here](#) to access NCMEC “Healthy Relationships”
Discussion Guide and questions.*

Taking Time to Get to Know Someone is Healthy

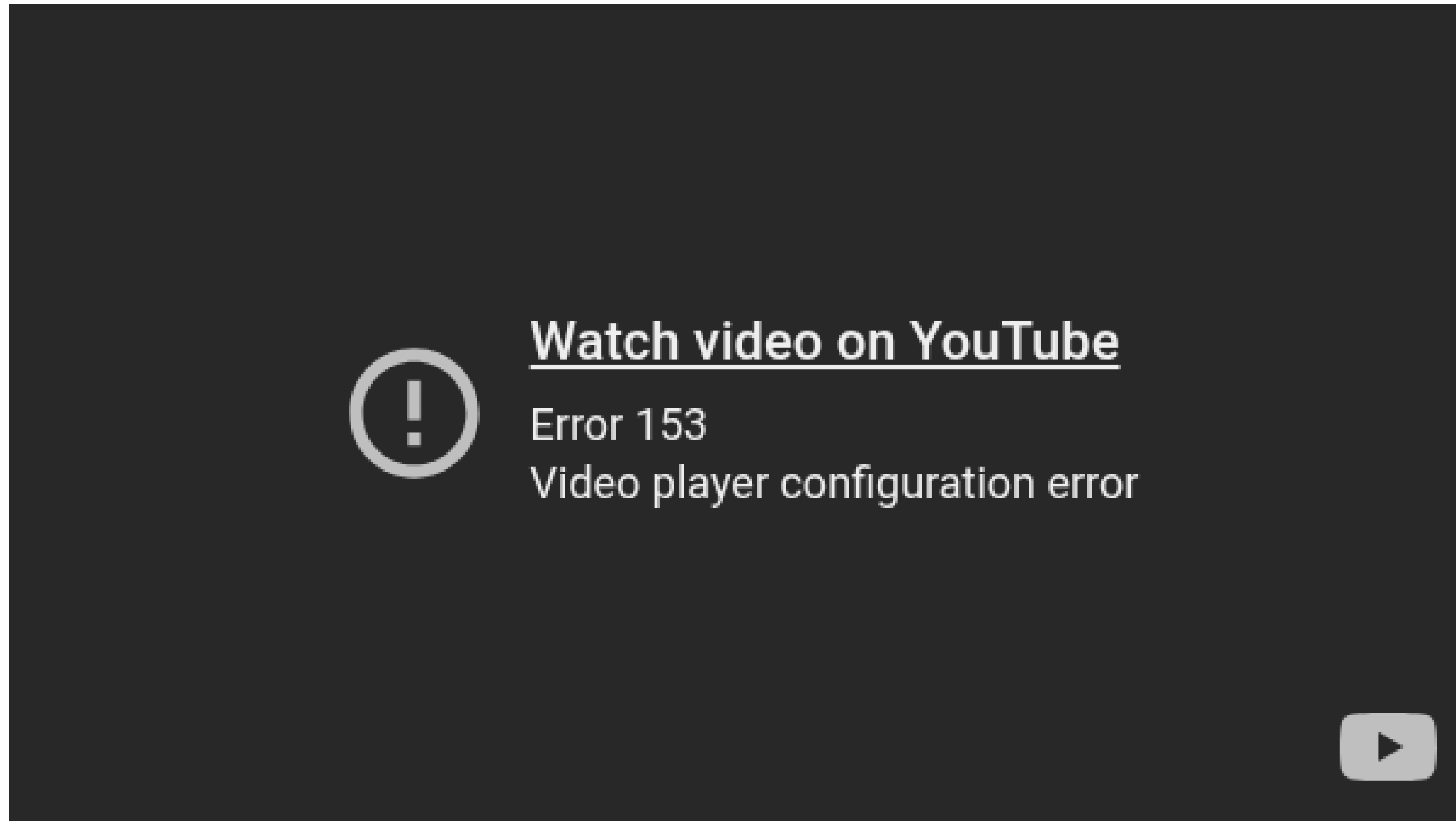


Learn about who they really are. It takes time to learn someone's interests, hobbies, likes, dislikes, etc.

Build trust. Trust is essential to having a healthy relationship. See how the person reacts to different situations, how they deal with emotions, how they communicate and problem solve.

Explore your feelings. Sometimes we can have strong initial chemistry or attraction but that doesn't mean you are compatible with someone.

DayOneNY “Don’t Confuse Love & Abuse” Video



Duration: 2:45 minutes

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L6HB97lbrQ>

“Don’t Confuse Love & Abuse” Discussion Questions

The class should get into 2 groups and the teacher will designate each group a number. Each group will answer the questions correlated with their group number and then present the answers to the class.

Group 1 Questions

What do you think the girl should do to get out of the abusive relationship? Who can she contact?

Have you seen relationships like this before at your school?

Group 2 Questions

What do you think was the biggest red flag in the boys behavior and why?

How would you have handled the situation?

Why Is It Hard to Leave an Unhealthy Relationship?



Fear of being alone.

Fear of changing their mind after the break-up.

Feeling like they can't end it.

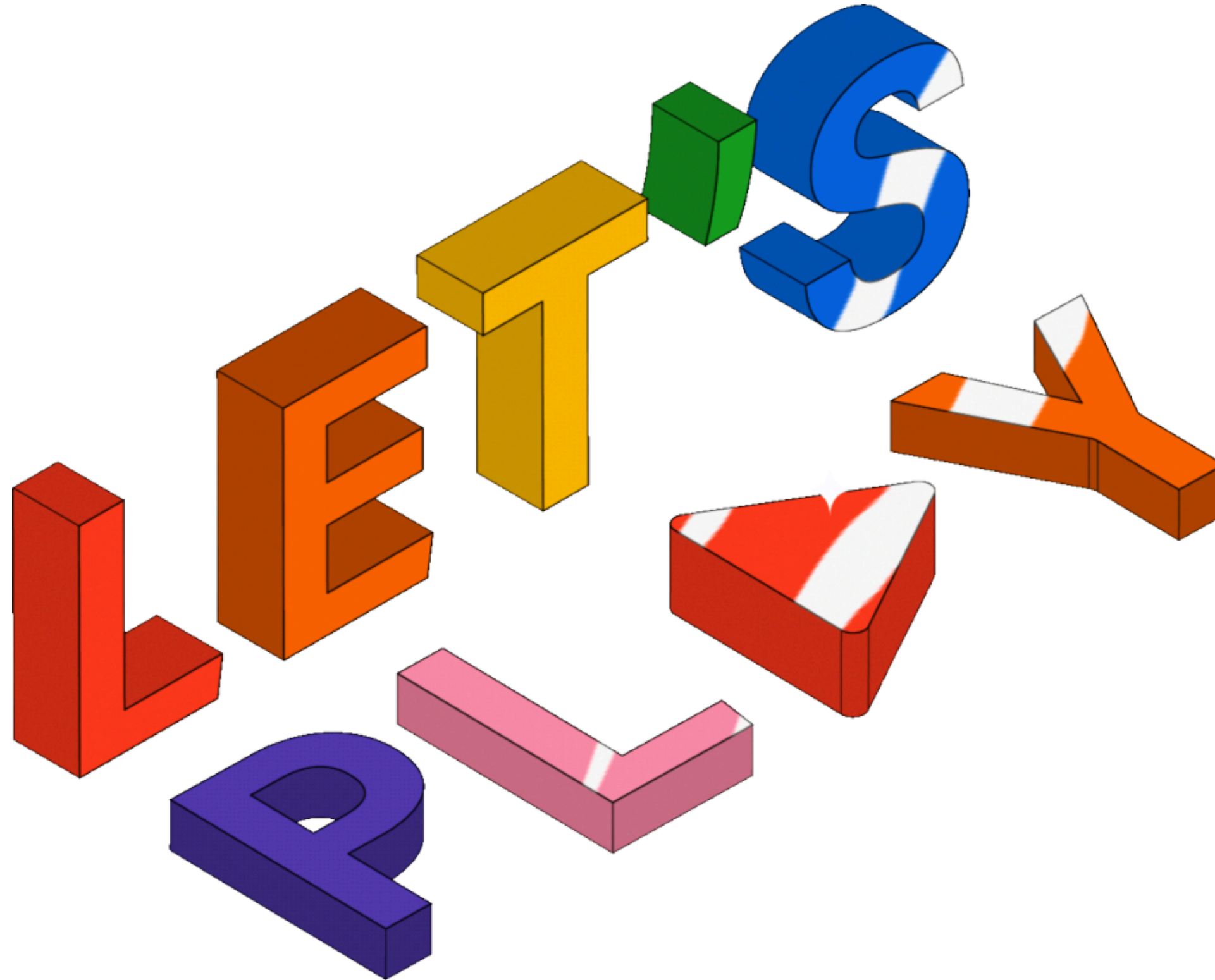
Feeling pulled back in.

Feeling responsible for the other person's safety.

The other person threatens or blackmails you.

Feeling like the other person does not let you end things.

Activity



Activity

We recommend playing
Connect for Freedom
Relationship Red Flags BINGO.

THE
END

Lesson Handout from The Dibble Institute

Facts About DATING VIOLENCE

Introduction

It's very likely that you or someone you know has been abused in a relationship. Dating violence isn't just physical. It can include mental/emotional abuse and sexual abuse. It can occur in casual dating or serious long-term relationships.

Mental/Emotional Abuse

Mental/Emotional abuse includes:

- Embarrassing you
- Put-downs
- Cussing
- Controlling you
- Making you feel bad about yourself
- Keeping you away from other friends and family

Threats of violence are abuse and should always be taken seriously.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes:

- Hitting
- Slapping
- Punching
- Shoving
- Kicking
- Biting
- Hair-pulling
- Using a weapon against a boyfriend/girlfriend

Teenage boys and girls both report being victims of physical violence in relationships. Normally, boys and girls use physical force for different reasons and with different results. Teens usually act violently because they are angry; boys are much more likely to use force in order to control their girlfriends, while girls more often act violently in self-defense.

Teenage girls suffer more from relationship violence, emotional and physical. Teenage girls are more likely than boys to have serious injuries and to report being terrified. In contrast, boys seldom seem to fear violence by their girlfriends, often saying that the attacks did not hurt and that it was funny.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is forced or unwanted sexual activity or rape. It is sexual abuse to force or pressure someone to engage in sexual activity. Trying to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol is also sexual abuse.

Girls in opposite-sex relationships are much more likely than boys to suffer from sexual abuse.

How frequently does dating violence occur?

This is a difficult question to answer because some studies only ask about physical abuse, while others include questions about mental/emotional abuse and sexual violence. Past estimates of dating violence among middle school and high school students range from 28% to 96%.

One recent national survey found that 1 in 11 high-school students said they had been hit, slapped, or physically abused in the past year. 1 in 11 students also reported that they had been forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.

96% of teens report mental/emotional abuse in their dating relationships.



The Dibble Institute
Relationship Skills for Teens



Lesson Handout from The Dibble Institute

What You Can Do

Know the early warning signs

- You are pressured to make the relationship very serious or to have sex early in the relationship.
- Extreme jealousy and possessiveness, saying these emotions are signs of love.
- Controlling you and forcefully making all decisions where the two of you are concerned.
- Refusing to consider your point of view or desires.
- Keeping you from spending time with close friends or family.
- Verbal abuse, including yelling, cussing, manipulation, spreading rumors and making you feel guilty.
- Drinking too much or using drugs and then blaming the alcohol and drugs for his/her behavior.
- Threatening physical violence.
- Previous abuse of a boyfriend/girlfriend or defending violence by others.

If you're in a relationship that in any way feels uncomfortable, awkward, tense or even scary, trust your feelings and get out. It could become, or may already be, abusive.

Always remember: You have every right to say no! No boyfriend or girlfriend has the right to tell you what you can or should do, what you can or should wear, or what kind of friends you should have.

Watch for friends who are abused

Friends in abusive relationships may:

- Change their clothing or makeup;
- Lose confidence in themselves;
- Have difficulty making decisions;
- Stop spending time with you and other friends;
- Receive failing grades or quit school activities; and
- Turn to using alcohol or drugs.

If you think a friend is in an abusive relationship, try asking them:

- "You don't seem as happy as usual – are you okay?"
- "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

This indirect approach may prompt your friend to reveal what's wrong. Listen without judging, condemning, or giving unwanted advice. If a friend wants help, suggest that he or she take the steps listed above in order to find help.

If you believe your friend is in serious danger, tell an adult you trust immediately. Do not try to "rescue" your friend and try to handle the situation on your own.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline
(800) 799-SAFE**



If you are in a violent, or potentially violent, relationship, do this:

- Make a safety plan and get help.
- Talk with someone you trust: a teacher, guidance counselor, doctor, friend or parent.
- Contact the police or a local domestic violence center or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE.
- Realize that violence will not just stop or go away. You cannot change your boyfriend/girlfriend by changing your behavior.
- You are not responsible for the abuse. Your boyfriend/girlfriend may need counseling or other help to change.

Take action if you suspect that someone you know is being abusive.

If you feel you are not in danger, talk to the person about his or her use of violence. Make sure that the person understands that it is both wrong and illegal. If the person is ready to make a change, help him/her get help.

If you are hurting someone else, have the courage to get help!

No matter what the other person does to provoke you. No matter how justified you feel. No matter what your friends do. It is never okay to harm someone else. Remember that violence is illegal and can land you in jail. You can learn new ways to:

- Deal with your anger
- Fight fair
- Communicate better
- Give and get love in relationships



Don't let shame or fear stop you. Talk to a parent, teacher, religious leader, doctor, nurse or guidance counselor immediately.

Or, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE. They can direct you to individuals and groups in your community who can help you to make a change.

Help educate other teens about dating violence

Counsel peers, staff a hotline, or speak to classes about the signs of an abusive relationship and where to find help. Encourage your church or school to develop programs to educate teens about dating violence, and work to make sure that there are resources for abused teens in your community.



Information provided by the Dibble Fund with permission from the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. For additional information, please visit www.safeyouth.org.

Links to Lesson Materials

[NCMEC “Healthy Relationships” Video](#)

[NCMEC “Healthy Relationships” Discussion Guide](#)

[DayOneNY “Don’t Confuse Love and Abuse” Video](#)

[The Dibble Institute “Dating Violence” Handout](#)

[Connect for Freedom Relationship Red Flags BINGO](#)

Recap of Lesson

Signs of an unhealthy relationship:

- Feeling scared, unsafe, or threatened
- Feeling manipulated or guilty often
- Feeling as though you are the only one who compromises
- Feeling disrespected during arguments
- Feeling emotionally drained, insulted or threatened during arguments
- Feeling pressured to do something

Taking time to get to know someone is healthy because:

- Learn about who they really are
- Build trust
- Explore your feelings

It can be hard to leave an unhealthy relationship due to:

- Fear of being alone
- Fear of changing their mind
- Feeling like they can't end it
- Feeling pulled back in
- Feeling responsible for the other person's safety
- Being threatened or blackmailed
- The other person not letting you end things