

Topic: Respectful Relationships
Evidence/research base

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Topic Overview

This topic builds students' knowledge key communication skills, in order to provide them with strategies to manage challenging or complex relationships with peers.

Learning intentions

The learning intentions for this topic includes an understanding of assertive communication strategies in order to resolve conflict, be an upstander and negotiate boundaries in friendships and intimate relationships.

Lessons

1. Psychology of relationships
2. Understanding conflict
3. Assertive communication
4. Resolving conflict
5. Bullying
6. Peer Pressure
7. Intimate relationships
8. Relationship breakdowns
9. Managing boundaries in relationships
10. Sexting

Duration of each individual lesson is approximately 15 minutes; schools do not need to run all lessons and may tailor make a session by selecting 2 – 3 lessons. A counsellor will support you in the pre-session consultation to create a session plan based on your needs and schedule.

Respectful Relationships: Lesson Overviews

Research Overview

Research has shown that stand-alone social skills training can have a range of positive impacts on mental health (Speed et al., 2017), comparable with other evidence-based interventions (Barth et al., 2013). School-based communication and assertiveness programs have been shown to improve peer negotiation skills and outcomes for adolescence (Wolfe, et al., 2011). Social skills training has also been shown to result in pro-social behaviour in situations of anti-social behaviours such as bullying (Padgett, et al., 2013). Furthermore, relationship skills are a resilience protective factor (Ungar et al., 2007). The Respectful Relationships topic focuses on assertiveness (Wolpe 1958; Wolpe & Lazarus 1966; Fensterheim & Baer, 1975), as a key social skill, and how students in varying situations, including in response to conflict, peer pressure, managing boundaries and negotiating interpersonal and intimate relationships, can use these practical communication skills.

Brain basics

This lesson covers key concepts of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969 & 1988 & Ainsworth, et al., 1978) and discusses brain changes that impact on social and interpersonal relationships experienced during puberty. The learning intentions for this lesson are a basic understanding of social brain changes in puberty and how these may influence adolescent behaviour and bonds with peers.

Understanding Conflict

This lesson explains the difference between different types of conflict and is an essential precursor to conflict resolution strategies. The learning intentions for this lesson include understanding the differences between mean, emotional responses, conflict and bullying.

Assertive Communication Strategies

This lesson focuses on communication types, based on the work of a number of researchers including, Wolpe (1958), Wolpe & Lazarus (1966) and Fensterheim & Baer, (1975). The learning intentions for this lesson include understanding the difference between passive, aggressive and assertive communication styles and learning strategies to be an assertive communicator.

Conflict Resolution

This lesson builds on assertive communication strategies to give feedback in a way that deescalates conflict and brings about positive change. The learning intentions for this lesson includes an understanding of conflict resolution communication strategies to achieve win/win outcomes for all parties involved.

Bullying

This lesson explains what bullying is and how to respond to challenging, anti-social behaviours or discrimination in a proactive way. The learning intentions for this lesson includes knowing how

to respond if you are bullied and strategies to be a positive bystander, or “upstander” (Padgett et al., 2013).

Peer Pressure

This lesson teaches students the science of peer pressure and strategies others use to pressure. The learning intentions for this lesson are an understanding of three key evidence-based peer resistance strategies (Wolfe, et al., 2012).

Intimate Relationships

This lesson provides psycho-education around love/dating and is a great introduction for the relationship breakdown, boundaries and/or sexting lessons. The learning intention for this session is an understanding of how and why we form intimate relationships.

Relationship breakdowns

This lesson provides an overview of the psychology of both rejection and breakups. The learning intention for this session is an understanding of the impacts of relationship breakdowns and knowledge of positive coping strategies (Langeslag & Sanchez, 2018).

Boundaries

This lesson discusses personal boundaries and can be tailored to suit managing boundaries either with peers or with intimate partners (i.e. consent). The learning intentions for this lesson include understanding what boundaries are and knowing how to respond assertively if a boundary is crossed.

Sexting

Kids Helpline is a partner of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. **yourtown** is an eSafety accredited Online Safety Program Provider. This lesson explores up-to-date statistics on image-based abuse (the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2017) and challenges students’ assumptions about sexting and viewing pornography. The learning intentions for this session includes knowledge of their personal online boundaries and strategies for responding to inappropriate behaviours online with assertiveness, resilience and humour.

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