

# Healthy Relationships

## INTRODUCTION

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Healthy Relationships courses support students in developing their sense of self and belonging within their communities. The health, safety, and wellbeing of young adults revolves so much around their social relationships, satisfaction with interpersonal connections, and sense of belonging. For students challenged by building and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, we offer various techniques and strategies to help them build the skills to thrive socially. This academic curriculum was developed to respond to the needs of many students who arrive on campus and struggle to build and maintain health-promoting connections with peers, roommates, classmates, and romantic partners. This *Curriculum At a Glance* provides you with a brief introduction to the 20 structured lesson plans.

These social wellbeing classes have been implemented and adopted by various secondary and post-secondary education institutions and organizations around the globe by facilitators like you who value and understand the importance of supporting students' whole personhood. Throughout your journey of building and growing these classes, remember you can rely on the CMHEP curriculum development team at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University for technical assistance and support and the LEAD facilitators around the world for their wisdom having done what you're doing. We're here for you.

## CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE

### INTRODUCTION, CLASS ORIENTATION & PERSONAL VALUES

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#### At A Glance:

In this class students and instructors will develop a community agreement. This agreement supports how students and instructors participate in class activities. Support all participants to interact in an equitable, inclusive, and respectful framework. Hold participants accountable for their contribution to the class dynamics.

Reflecting on meaningful values provides biological and psychological protection from the adverse effects of stress, (Creswell, 2013). In this class we will be examining our personal values. Identifying ways in which our values show up in our everyday lives, and how we seek out our personal values in the interpersonal relationships we develop.

#### Key Objectives:

- *Identify and explain course expectations and objectives.*
- *Interpret social expectations and social norms around making and keeping friendships.*
- *Explore personal needs/values in friendships.*
- *Identify facilitators and barriers to building and maintaining friendships.*

## **BUILDING PEER CONNECTIONS & BELONGING**

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### **At A Glance:**

In this class we will discuss why quality connection is so vital to our psychological and physiological outcomes by exploring the difference between small talk and interpersonal closeness. We will then use questions—provided by the facilitator—that encourage discussion about meaningful topics inspired by Aron et al.’s study.

### **Key Objectives:**

- Students will be able to identify the reason why interpersonal connections support our psychological & physiological health.
- Students will distinguish between small talk & interpersonal closeness.
- Students will ask each other questions to cultivate meaningful discussions.
- Students will maintain agency around what they chose to disclose.
- Students will practice being mindful while their peer share.

## **SOCIAL NORMS & SOCIAL NETWORKS**

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### **At A Glance:**

In this class, students discuss the interconnectedness of social norms across cultures and how their social networks are built and maintained (modality: in-person, social media, gaming, apps & temporal: “old friends” “high school friends”, “new friends”). Students will also examine their personal satisfaction with their social network (peer & friend connections) and how that influences their overall wellbeing and sense of belonging.

### **Key Objectives:**

- Explain the relationship between social and cultural norms influence expectations for how social networks are built and maintained.
- Examine personal satisfaction as well as facilitators and barriers to building and maintaining friend and peer connections.
- Reframe a negative thought-feeling-action pattern as it relates to making friends.

## **IDENTIFYING & NAVIGATING HEALTHY V. UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

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### **At A Glance:**

Students explore tools for evaluating the “healthiness” of relationship(s) as well as how unhealthy relationship(s) behaviors impact overall wellbeing. Students practice by identifying both healthy and unhealthy behaviors in popular culture.

### **Key Objectives:**

- Identify markers for categorizing relationships as healthy, and unhealthy.
- Explain how culture and power dynamics exist within and influence intimate relationship(s).

- Review strategies of how to identify healthy and unhealthy patterns that arise in relationships.

## **INTERSECTIONALITY OF IDENTITIES**

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### **At A Glance:**

Students examine areas of their social identity, in particular the intersectionality of identities and areas of social identity that may be invisible. Students explore ways to share personal information about identity across various cultures, environments, and relationships.

### **Key Objectives:**

- *List and define areas of social identity and explain impact of culture, environment, relationship type.*
- *Identity intersectionality on disclosure and relationship interactions in general.*
- *Describe the difference between visible and invisible areas of social identity.*

## **IDENTITY DISCLOSURE**

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### **At A Glance:**

Students examine both personal and social identities and how our social categorization of people can often lead to stereotyping. Students will further discuss how the extent, nature, and timing of disclosure varies across relationships and is influenced by privilege and power experienced individually and within relationships.

### **Key Objectives:**

- *Explain the common facilitators and barriers experienced with disclosure across relationships as it relates to power and privilege.*
- *Navigate and practice language around how to disclosure areas of identity across various relationships.*

## **“WE NEED TO TALK”: TOOLS FOR ENGAGING IN DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

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### **At A Glance:**

In this class, students are introduced to the mnemonic device DEARMAN, its origins in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, and its function as a tool for building and maintaining health-promoting interpersonal connections. Through role plays, students practice advocating for various needs in friend and peer relationships, “fair fighting”, active listening, and responding with empathy.

### **Key Objectives:**

- *Describe DEARMAN as a tool for navigating difficult conversations.*
- *Identify various relationships in which difficult conversations arise.*

- *Explain the function of engaging in a difficult conversation to build and/or maintain health-promoting connections with others.*
- *Explain the rules to “fair fighting” and the processes of active listening and responding with empathy.*

## **“WE NEED TO TALK”: CREATING & MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES**

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### **At A Glance:**

Students examine reasons for and the social-emotional effects of ending peer, friend, and partner relationships. Students revisit concepts: DEARMAN, “fair fighting”, and listening and responding to practice engaging in difficult conversations like establishing boundaries (pre-, peri-, and post-relationship) and ending relationships. Students further explore the mnemonic device FAST for ending relationships and concrete in-person and online action steps may be involved in various “break ups”.

### **Key Objectives:**

- *Explain the impact of friend breakups on social and emotional wellbeing.*
- *Explain the rules to “fair fighting” and the processes of active listening and responding with empathy.*
- *Define the mnemonic device FAST and describe its function.*
- *Explain how to approach a difficult conversation (e.g. establishing a boundary or a break up)*
- *Differentiate between break up conversation approaches and outcomes based on the relationship.*
- *Explaining the purpose and function of establishing boundaries before, during and after a relationship has ended.*

## **COMMUNICATION BARRIERS & PITFALLS**

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### **At A Glance:**

Students explore their own communication styles. Examine Julian Treasure’s 7 deadly sins of communication and evaluate how each factor impacts their intimate, social, work, and academic relationships.

### **Key Objectives:**

- *List Julian Treasure’s seven deadly sins of communication.*
- *Describe the influence of communication styles on overall health and wellness.*
- *Think through how to be proactive in identifying and setting boundaries around the use of these communication styles.*

## SELF-COMPASSION IN ACTION

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### **At A Glance:**

Students discuss the notion of forgiveness to ourselves and others. Think through how forgiveness is a component of self-compassion and identify other ways in which we provide self-compassion to ourselves.

### **Key Objectives:**

- *Identify when you're under stress or suffering and learn how to respond with care and kindness.*
- *Think of ways in which you are already doing this and how you can pull from those in moments of distress.*

## RELATIONSHIP SELF-ADVOCACY: GOALS, NEEDS & EXPECTATIONS

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### **At A Glance:**

Students explore the benefits and challenges faced self-advocating in various relationship contexts as well as practice advocating for needs given various power dynamics within relationships. Particular attention is paid to establishing boundaries within various relationships based on personal values, needs, and expectations.

### **Key Objectives**

- *Recognize statements of self-advocacy.*
- *Provide examples of self-advocacy across various relationships.*
- *Identify areas where personal self-advocacy would be important to maintain overall wellbeing. Define "power dynamics" and "boundaries" and explain the barriers to self-advocacy experienced in relationships with inequities in power, privilege, or access.*
- *Define consent within a relationship.*

## ONLINE PRESENCE & ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

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### **At A Glance:**

Students explore how they perceive and represent themselves online as well as how they engage in online relationships through social media in relation to their overall personal wellbeing, sense of belonging, and work and school relationships. Further students are introduced to the topic of consent as it relates to consensual online connections and relationships.

### **Key Objectives**

- *List common and personal experiences related to maintaining an "online presence."*
- *Define and differentiate between online and in-person presence and relationships.*
- *Define consent as it relates to various online relationships.*
- *Explain the concept of "e-consent" and the explicit and subtle ways permission is granted to communicate in various online relationships.*

## HEALTHY COMMUNICATION: ASKING FOR AND RECEIVING CONSENT

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### **At A Glance:**

Students continue to examine what it means to give consent; freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic, and specific. Understanding of how when people want to engage in any kind of physical, intimate, or sexual activity, they need to be on the same page about what they're doing and how they're doing it through clear, explicit communication.

### **Key Objectives**

- *Students identify what giving consent means and looks like.*
- *Student practice asking for consent through various scenarios and differentiate between different responses and practice communicating when unsure.*
- *Discuss barriers to asking for consent; address how to combat and overcome them.*

## BUILDING A TOOLKIT FOR DATING READINESS

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### **At A Glance:**

In this class, students identify the basic readiness for dating and examine how that is both culturally and personally informed. Students further examine personal dating values, common ways to find a date, how to ask someone on a date, and establish boundaries on dates.

### **Key Objectives**

- *Define dating readiness and describe personal strengths and challenges around dating readiness.*
- *List personal dating values and potential approaches to find someone to date.*
- *Describe methods for and the importance of establishing boundaries on a date.*

## INTIMATE PARTNER READINESS

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### **At A Glance:**

Through guided discussions and personal reflection, students examine their readiness to engage in an intimate partner relationship(s) and explore tools for evaluating their satisfaction with and the “healthiness” of the relationship(s) as well as how an intimate partner relationship(s) impacts overall wellbeing. Student’s practice engaging in difficult conversations that arise with partners including discussing “seriousness” and exclusivity with a partner.

### **Key Objectives**

- *Describe personal readiness to engage in an intimate partner relationship.*
- *Identify markers for categorizing relationships as healthy, unhealthy, and abusive.*
- *Ways to navigate maintaining or ending relationships respectively.*
- *Explain how culture and power dynamics exist within and influence intimate relationship(s). Explain how to approach a difficult conversation with a partner(s).*

## **LET'S GET PHYSICAL, OR NOT.... UNDERSTANDING YOUR SEXUALITY**

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### **At A Glance:**

Students learn about the five circles of sexuality – sensuality, intimacy, sexualization, sexual health & reproduction, and sexual identity – and examine personal tendencies and preferences and how those are influenced by social identity, culture, and cultural norms. Additionally, students will explore ways to explore their sexuality including through physical connections and pornography.

### **Key Objectives**

- List and define five circles of sexuality.
- Describe personal identity and reactions across the five circles as it relates to the intersection of other personal social identities.

## **MORE ON DATING: APPS, ATMOSPHERES, & AIRS**

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### **At A Glance:**

Through interactive activities and group discussions, students examine various dating apps, dating environments, and dating safety, consent, and mutual respect within those environments. Students also learn to assess how they are being received by their dating partner(s) and ways they're communicating their interest/disinterest in the relationship across first and subsequent dates.

### **Key Objectives**

- *List various dating apps, functions, and features.*
- *Explain how various dating environments provide varying opportunities for connection, communication, and intimacy.*
- *Define consent across various dating environments.*
- *Identify signs or markers of interest or intimacy as well as disinterest and danger.*

## **MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS**

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### **At A Glance:**

Students explore and discuss the steps, skills, and supports involved in building and maintaining relationships across various cultures. Additionally, students examine what relationships evolve when the relationships are long-distance and/or online as well as revisit the role of physical connection in these relationships.

### **Key Objectives**

- *Describe a range of attributes that might be used to describe a relationship.*
- *Identify examples and non-examples of health-promoting relationships.*

## **ROOMMATES & COHABITATION**

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### **At A Glance:**

Students examine the roles and responsibilities they assume as roommates as well as evaluate the skills, strengths, preferences, and needs they bring to cohabitation relationships. Students also

discuss “campus life” before, during, and after the COVID pandemic and examine personal readiness, preferences, and strategies for on-campus living with/without a roommate.

### **Key Objectives**

- *Describe personal cohabitation strengths, needs, preferences, and challenges.*
- *Define “environmental wellness” and environmental boundaries and describe how roommates/cohabitants personally influence wellbeing.*
- *Describe and draft a roommate agreement.*

## **WRAP UP: STOP, START, CONTINUE**

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### **At A Glance:**

In the final class, students review the skills and tools they learned, practiced, and developed throughout the course and evaluate and share which approaches to managing and maintaining health- promoting relationships they’d like to stop, start, or continue.

### **Key Objectives**

- *Identify and describe personal approaches, strategies, and tools used or tried to build and maintain various interpersonal relationships.*
- *Examine satisfaction with changes made and new approaches tried throughout the semester.*



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