

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: *CIRRICULUM AT A GLANCE*

INTRODUCTION

The Healthy Relationships course supports 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.

Institutions of higher education prioritize students' wellbeing largely in the context of their academic aptitude and persistence. Yet students' academic success can be jeopardized if they are also lacking the skills and self-efficacy to build strong, interpersonal connections and community, as belonging and wellbeing are central to academic perseverance (Eisenberg, et al., 2016). Our definition of student success, as it relates to this session and the Healthy Relationships course, is whole-person oriented and spans across various dimensions of wellbeing – social, academic, physical, environmental, emotional, occupational, and spiritual ([cite SAMHSA 8 domains of wellness](#)).

This Healthy Relationships Facilitation Guide provides 26 structured lesson plans for you to choose from as you build your Healthy Relationships program that addresses the unique needs of your student body. Some of the classes are intentionally ordered, however, there is great flexibility built into the curriculum. The goal of course is to “make the students your content”. Shift toward topics they’ve identified as pressing and priorities. This Guide also provides you with supplemental worksheets to support multimodal instruction as well as resources and reference materials. The thoughtfully curated exercises for each class session invite whole person reflection and growth with an emphasis on supporting the participants to achieve their higher educational and vocational goals.

Healthy Relationships was piloted at Boston University in 2019, in collaboration with BU’s SPH Dr. Emily Rothman, OT department Chairwoman, and her research, as a part of NITEO’s summer semester, to help undergraduate students successfully return to school following a brief mental health interruption or hospitalization. Participants reported that the instructors, environment, and the skills-building curriculum facilitated their transition back to school to pursue their degrees of higher education.

Since its pilot semester, Healthy Relationship has remained one of the core wellness classes in NITEO. and is provided as an open-enrollment course at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation each semester in which any young adult from any college or university can enroll regardless of their college enrollment status. This open-enrollment section remains a steppingstone for students resuming and completing their postsecondary degree programs. The material has been translated to multiple settings and for multiple needs; both in-person, online and one-on-one coaching dissemination.

This class is now recognized by the Equal Opportunity Office and the Dean of Students Office as a restorative learning opportunity for Title IV respondents, currently for students only, at Boston University.

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CLASSES:

1. Personal Values & Community Agreement
2. 8 Domains of Wellness and SMARTER Goals
3. Connection & Belonging
4. Balancing College Stressors and Identifying Supports
5. Identifying Healthy VS. Unhealthy Relationships
6. Social Norms and Networks
7. Intersectionality of Identities
8. Formation of Identities
9. Communication Barriers and Building Empathy
10. Responding with Empathy & Expanding our Emotional
11. Engaging in Difficult Conversations
12. Identifying, Implementing and Maintaining Boundaries
13. Giving and Receiving Consent
14. Dating Readiness
15. Let's get physical, or not... Understanding your Sexuality
16. Levels of Disclosure
17. Imposter Syndrome
18. Love Languages & the 4-Horsemen
19. Understanding and Integrating our Different Parts
20. Substances and Cohabitation
21. Online Presence & Online Relationships
22. More on Dating, Apps, Atmospheres and Airts
23. Time Management and Sleep Hygiene
24. Mind Gut Connection
25. Procrastination & Self-efficacy
26. Stop, Start, Continue

CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE:

Personal Values & Community Agreement

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.

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Key Objectives:

- Students will be oriented to the objectives of the class.
- Facilitator and students set an intention of what a community agreement is and develop one
- Students will be able to define what a value is.
- Students will examine the benefits of identifying their values.
- Students will identify their personal values.

8 Domains of Wellness and SMARTER Goals

At A Glance:

In this class, students will get an orientation to the workshop content, expectations, and objectives. They will also explore the eight dimensions of wellness outlined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and evaluate their satisfaction with and set goals around their wellness. Students will also learn about the framework of readiness for change and the core elements that support change readiness and sustainability.

Key Objectives:

- Identify and explain course expectations and objectives.
- List and define eight domains of wellness.
- Explain interconnectedness of domains and influence of collegiate life on wellness.
- Evaluate and describe satisfaction with personal wellness across eight dimensions.
- Describe the Acronym SMARTER and discuss how it is effective in setting goals

Connection & Belonging

At A Glance:

Students explore the relationship between wellbeing and belonging as it relates to peer relationships and a sense of community within personal and group dynamics. Through discussion and interactive practice, students further explore personal strengths they bring to interpersonal connections, develop strategies for fostering relationships and barriers to initiating new connections or deepening current connections.

Key Objectives:

- Describe developing new relationships in various cultural contexts.
- Identify personal strengths, values, and abilities that guide making and keeping peer relationships.
- Students will distinguish between small talk & interpersonal closeness.

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- Identify the reason why quality interpersonal connections support our psychological & physiological health.
- Examine how to deepen connections with our peers.

Balancing College Stressors and Identifying Supports

At a Glance:

In class two, students explore the definitions, sources, and signs of collegiate stress and distress. Students also examine and evaluate their social relationships and identify people and systems that can offer health promoting support in times of stress or distress.

Key Objectives:

- List common signs and sources of collegiate distress.
- Define and differentiate between stress, distress, and eustress.
- Describe general and personal factors that influence wellness/collegiate wellness.
- Identify social connections that promote health, safety, and support.

Identifying Healthy VS. Unhealthy Relationships

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.

Social Norms and Networks

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.

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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.

Intersectionality of Identities

At A Glance:

Students discuss their own social identities and how this impacts their sense of belonging and connection in relationships, environments and culture. 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.

Intersectionality is a term coined by scholar Kimberle Crenshaw to explain how individual aspects of our identities (our gender, race, ethnicity, class, etc.) intersect and, in turn, can shape how we're treated, what kind of education and jobs we get, where we live, what opportunities were afforded, and what kind of inequities we may face. Discuss how key facets of our identity play significant roles in determining how we understand and experience the world, as well as shaping the types of opportunities and challenges we face.

Key Objectives:

- Identify categories of social identity and describe their relationship to belonging.
- Explore the intersection of these identities and the impact of that on our experiences
- Examine how we hold both visible and invisible parts of our identities and how sharing these pieces fuels connection.

Formation of Identities

At A Glance:

Students discuss and explore the intersection between media and issues of identity. Examine the impact the media plays in helping to shape the way these identities are formed and influence our experiences. Identity is an important step in understanding ourselves and the world around us. Explore how we learn about our own identity and the identity of others through interactions with family, peers, organizations, institutions, media and other connections we make in our everyday life.

We will explore complex ideological questions around media and power. Think about how media is constructed, disseminated, interpreted and how our identities are or are not represented in the media we consume.

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Key Objectives:

- Identify categories of social identity and describe their relationship to belonging.
- Explore Implicit Biases and the impact of these on our identities
- Examine how media has shaped our understanding of how social identities are valued

Communication Barriers and Pitfalls

At A Glance:

Students explore their own communication styles. Engage in discussion around when they felt heard and when they felt unheard in a conversation with someone. Examine the 12 roadblocks of communication and evaluate how each factor impacts their intimate, social, work, and academic relationships.

Key Objectives:

- Practice effective communication with peers in pairs.
- List and discuss the 12 roadblocks 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.

Responding with Empathy & Expanding our Emotional Vocabulary

At A Glance:

Through interactive discussion, videos and roles plays, students will examine and practice empathy as a tool for cultivating health-promoting relationships and wellness. Explore ways to expand their emotional vocabulary as a tool to use for responding.

Key Objectives:

- Recognize empathic versus non-empathic responding.
- Recognize and implement behaviors associated with responding with empathy, including active listening, and identifying and using feeling words to communicate understanding about emotions.
- Explain the effectiveness of responding to someone with empathy.
- Identify and use accurate feeling words across various emotions and intensities.
- Incorporate feeling words when responding to others.

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:

- Explain the rules to “fair fighting” and the processes of active listening and responding with empathy.
- 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.

Identifying, Implementing and Maintaining Boundaries

At A Glance:

Students examine reasons for and the social-emotional effects of ending peer, friend, and partner relationships. Students discuss importance of 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.
- 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.

Giving and Receiving Consent

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.

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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.

Dating Readiness

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.

Let's get physical, or not... Understanding your sexuality.

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. Discuss influence society and culture, including media literacy, shame and stigma, and how power, identity, and oppression impact sexual wellness and reproductive freedom.

Key Objectives:

- Student will list and define five circles of sexuality.
- Student will discuss the impact of sexuality in our personal and social identities.
- Students will explore the influence of society, politics, education & religion in sexual and reproductive wellness.

Levels of disclosure

At A Glance:

Students explore the benefits and challenges to personal disclosure and think through the different levels of disclosure and how relationships evolve through these levels as we build closer ties. Navigate and explore the impact of power dynamics within relationships.

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Key Objectives:

- Recognize levels of disclosure.
- Provide examples of each level of disclosure and across various relationships.
- Identify areas where areas of personal disclosure would be important to maintain overall wellbeing.
- Show examples from pop culture; student name which level of disclosure the example was and if based on relationship was an appropriate disclosure.

Imposter Syndrome & Counterbalancing

At A Glance:

Students examine the term Imposter Syndrome, looking at different ways this materializes for themselves and others. Students will explore the different types of imposters and how they might identify with them. Students will then examine alternative ways to engaging with these thoughts, feeling and behaviors to counterbalance the imposter feelings.

Key Objectives:

- *Define Imposter Syndrome*
- *Discuss how it manifests in our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.*
- *Examine different types of imposters and how those behaviors externalize.*
- *Explore ways to counterbalance imposter syndrome's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.*

Love Language & the 4-Horsemen

At A Glance:

Through guided discussions and personal reflection, students examine their own love languages and how they express love and intimacy. Love languages are used to describe how people prefer to show and receive love and affection. There are five: words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, acts of service, and receiving gifts. Understanding your love language and others can help communication and support us in meeting ours and others emotional needs. Identify the Gottman's institute 4-horseman and share the antidotes to these. Discuss how knowing the destructive behaviors in relationship and the healthy responses lead to more effective communication in intimate relationships.

Key Objectives:

- Describe how you show affection and love to others.
- Examine how you saw love being expressed by influential people throughout your life.
- Explore how you like to be shown love and affection.
- Identify how this information can support healthy communication and support intimate relationships.
- Share the Gottman's institute 4 horseman and the antidotes.

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Understanding and Integrating our Different Parts

At A Glance:

In this class, students are introduced to the model of Internal Family Systems (IFS). Which posits that a person cannot be understood in isolation. This evidence-based approach assumes everyone possesses a variety of sub-personalities, or “parts,” and attempts to get to know each of these parts better to achieve healing. To not repeat patterns, we have internalized or developed in response to these parts.

Key objectives:

- Explore IFS model and its connection to self and relationships.
- Develop greater self-awareness and understanding of their own parts and how they influence their relationship dynamics.
- Gain insight into their partner’s parts and develop empathy for their experiences.
- Learn to communicate more openly and honestly with one another.

Roommates and Cohabitation

At A Glance:

In this class, students will have an opportunity to consider the effects and influences of substances and substance use including language students use to describe use, addiction, and recovery. Students will also cultivate awareness around their personally held biases and attitudes and the impact those have on relationships. 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. Examine personal readiness, preferences, and strategies for on-campus living with/without a roommate.

Key Objectives:

- List various substances and describe positive and negative effects from use.
- Recognize and interrupt stigmatizing language in a health-promoting, productive manner.
- Identify and respond to personal biases and attitudes.
- Describe the relationship language, biases, and attitudes have on personal relationships.
- 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, include how substance would be addressed in the living arrangement.

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.

More on Dating, Apps, Atmospheres and Aurs

At a Glance

Through interactive activities and group discussions, students discuss the new landscape of dating, 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. Students explore how they represent themselves online as well as how they engage in social media in relation to their overall personal wellbeing, sense of belonging, and work and school relationships.

Key Objectives

- List various dating apps, functions, and features.
- Explain how various dating environments provide varying opportunities for connection, communication, intimacy, and consent.
- Identify signs or markers of interest or intimacy as well as disinterest and danger.
- List common and personal experiences related to maintaining an “online presence.”
- Explore terminology of this new dating landscape.

Time Management & Sleep Hygiene

At a Glance

Students will explore their individual social rhythms, rhythm synchronizer, and rhythms disruptors. They will also examine their individual time-keeping cues, discuss the impact disruptions in social rhythms have on executive functioning and productivity and strategize how to reset social rhythms for wellness and academic/work persistence. Students will examine their personal time management tools and traps.

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Key Objectives:

- Define social timekeepers and social rhythms.
- List examples of common social timekeepers for college students.
- Explain the relationship between social rhythms, wellness, time management, and productivity.
- List individual environmental cues that run your “internal clock”.
- Explain sources and signs of a disruption to personal social rhythm.
- List strategies that help/hinder managing time-bound tasks and responsibilities.

Mind Gut Connection

At A Glance:

Explain and discuss the mind-gut connection and the neurotransmitters involved. Examine the impact of stress and emotions on our gut. Identify the top mood foods and benefits. Discuss personal impact of wellness around food intake and challenges faced with engaging with top mood foods.

Key Objectives:

- Describe the mind gut connection.
- Identify top mood foods.
- Examine barriers to top food intake and strategies.

Self-Efficacy and Procrastination

At a Glance:

In this class, students will explore reasons for and the impact of procrastination and identify, practice, and evaluate strategies for overcoming procrastination. Students will also practice a self-efficacy building exercise rooted in Edith Grotberg’s findings in the International Resilience Project and build goals around an undertaking on which they’re currently procrastinating.

Key Objectives:

- Define procrastination and identify common, specific barriers that lead to procrastination.
- Identify and apply personally effective strategies to address procrastination.
- Define self-efficacy and describe the connection between procrastination and self-efficacy using Edith Grotberg’s “language of resilience: I have, I am, I can” exercise.

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 domains of wellness.
- Examine satisfaction with changes made and new approaches tried throughout the semester.

Implementing this curriculum at your organization: Permission to customize this guide by including information and resources specific to your organization is conditioned upon acceptance of the Terms of Service to uphold the integrity of the content and copyright.

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