

Lesson 2: Rights and Responsibilities in Healthy Relationships

Introduction

In this lesson students learn about the rights and responsibilities associated with healthy relationships. Any right claimed in a relationship carries with it a duty or a responsibility either for the claimant or for the partner. Mutually respecting relationship rights and responsibilities is a way of ensuring the health of the partnership.

This lesson provides students with opportunities to examine and explore the many facets of rights and responsibilities and apply them to a variety of relationships.



Specific Learning Outcome

12.HR.3 Examine rights and responsibilities of individuals in relationships, and explore how respecting these rights and responsibilities may affect the development of relationships.



Key Understandings

- Healthy relationships involve respecting individual rights (e.g., consent to sexual activity) and responsibilities.
 - Understanding rights and responsibilities involves respecting individual perspectives related to, but not limited to, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, and religion.
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Essential Questions

1. What are the rights and responsibilities of individuals in a relationship?
 2. What constitutes consent to sexual activity?
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Background Information

What Is a Right?

A *right* is an entitlement to perform or not to perform certain actions, either legally or morally. With each right that a person possesses, there is a corresponding duty or responsibility. For example, vehicle drivers have the right to drive on public roads and the responsibility to follow the laws and rules of the road to ensure their own safety and the safety of those around them.

A person can claim or assert many rights, such as the right to exist, to be loved, to be cared for, to have access to food, water, and shelter, to a secure environment, to freedom of choice, to feel proud of own actions, to privacy, to an education, to fair and equal treatment, and so on. Some rights are determined by law (e.g., age for alcohol consumption), some are conditional (e.g., free speech balanced with freedom from discrimination), and some can become limited or restricted (e.g., enforcement of curfews).

Human Rights Legislation

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which is Part 1 of *The Constitution Act, 1982*, guarantees the rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens. It may be helpful to review with students some key aspects of Canadian human rights legislation and policies. (Manitoba students studied these rights and freedoms as part of the Grade 9 Social Studies curriculum.)

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* sets out rights and freedoms that Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society. It establishes equality rights before and under the law and states, in part, the following:

Guarantee of Rights and Freedoms

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Equality Rights

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Cultural Diversity: Balancing Legal Rights and Responsibilities

Students in Manitoba classrooms may come from differing backgrounds and experiences with respect to their knowledge of and attitudes toward human rights and responsibilities as reflected in Canadian and provincial legislation, policies, and practices. Moreover, human rights and responsibilities are continually evolving in Canada and in other countries. Countries may be at different points in their development of human rights legislation and policy. In some countries, there may be a significant gap between the legislation and policies and the actual practices. Students and their families who are relatively new to Canada may have limited knowledge of human rights legislation and practices in Canada and may have a different concept of the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizens than those who have been in the country longer.

Students and their families may also reflect a variety of different faith groups and belief systems, which may conflict with some aspects of human rights legislation and policy. It is important that students explore their legal rights and responsibilities without demeaning or devaluing their right of freedom of religion. Therefore, students need to explore how to balance legal rights and responsibilities with their own faith or belief systems.

Keep in mind that *equity* does not mean that both persons in a relationship must do exactly the same work in the home or take responsibility for exactly the same aspects of maintaining a healthy relationship. Families vary in the way they share responsibilities based on a variety of factors. Some of these may be based on personal practices, preferences, and choices, and others on social and cultural norms. It is important for students to explore how the principle of equity may play out in different relationships in different ways.

Nevertheless, as human rights legislation and practices in Canada have an impact on family law, all students need to explore how these inform and help shape healthy relationships.

REFERENCES



For additional information on rights and freedoms in Canada, refer to the following resources:

Department of Justice Canada. *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Ottawa, ON: Department of Justice, 1982. Available online at <www.laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/>.

---. *The Constitution Act*. Ottawa, ON: Department of Justice, 1982. Available online at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/annex_e.html>.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. *Grade 9 Social Studies: Canada in the Contemporary World: A Foundation for Implementation*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2007. Available online at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/index.html>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Distinguishing between a Right and a Privilege: An Activating Activity

This activating activity is intended to check (in general terms) students' prior knowledge related to an individual's rights and the distinction between a right and a privilege.

To prompt discussion, have students share their ideas on whether they would consider the following to be a right or a privilege in Canada:

- Get a tattoo.
- Play on a sports team.
- Harangue or "boo" a sports official.
- Obtain legal counsel.
- Engage in sexual relations.
- Marry a gay/lesbian partner.
- Live in a safe home.
- Have a cell phone in school.
- Have access to medical care.



Background Information

Personal Rights within Relationships

It is important for students to know their personal rights within a relationship. An individual's rights include the following.

A PERSONAL BILL OF RIGHTS *

- I have the right to be respected; and I will respect others.
- I have the right to make decisions that fit my values.
- I have the right to affection without having to have sex.
- If I do not want physical closeness, I have a right to say "no."
- I have the right to start a relationship slowly, before I become involved.
- When a relationship is ending, I will not change myself to try to keep it going.
- I have the right to ask for change in a relationship.
- I have the right to postpone pregnancy until I am truly ready to be a parent.
- I have the right to stay safe from sexually transmitted infections.
- I have the right to get a good education.
- I have the right to plan my future.
- I have the right to change my goals.

* Source: PPM 1998; rev. Sexuality Education Resource Centre Manitoba, 2008. Adapted with permission.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

Have students explore the rights and responsibilities associated with various roles in relationships.

Directions/Description

- Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group to one of the following roles, with the task of developing a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (using RM 3–HR) for the assumed role:
 - parent (potential parent)
 - friend
 - child
 - student
 - sport participant
 - employee
- The Bill of Rights and Responsibilities should include the following two sections:
 - I have a right to . . .
 - I have a responsibility to . . .
- Have each group present their Bill of Rights and Responsibilities to the class.



Refer to RM 3–HR: Bill of Rights and Responsibilities.



Background Information

Responsibility in Relationships

Responsibility is having a duty and being accountable for one’s actions. Responsible people do what needs to be done, fulfill their obligations, are answerable for their actions, use good judgment, and don’t let people down. Being responsible, therefore, involves values such as trust and reliability.

When we are in a relationship with another person we have a responsibility to look after one another. If we neglect to perform these responsibilities, the relationship may become unhealthy. In some cases, relationships may become unsafe.

Each person in a relationship has the following responsibilities:

- Accept the other person as an individual and treat each other with kindness and caring. Any form of abuse in a relationship is unacceptable.
- Respect and value each other's rights.
- Discuss all aspects of the relationship, including sexual health (e.g., sexual history, testing for sexually transmitted infections, risks, contraception), and share in the decisions and resulting actions.
- Listen actively and validate and support each other's feelings.
- Honour the mutually agreed upon decisions and choices.
- Make, and allow each other to make, personal choices and decisions.
- Dignify the relationship by never pressuring each other to do things that either person is not comfortable doing, including any sexual activity.

Consent to Sexual Activity

In addition to recognizing rights and responsibilities in relationships, students need to understand what consent means and how it is given within a healthy sexual relationship. Ensuring active, informed, and freely given consent is a vital factor in healthy sexual relationships.

Unless a person actively says “yes” to an intimate/romantic/sexual act, the partner is not permitted physical contact: “The law in Canada states that only ‘yes means yes’ and everything else means NO” (Klinic 15).

In 2008, Canada's “age of consent” laws raised the age of consent from 14 years old to 16 years old. These laws were changed to provide children with further protection from sexual exploitation.

NOTE TO TEACHER

Due to the sensitive nature of this content, please be aware of and follow divisional policies/guidelines with respect to the delivery of sensitive content. Also be aware that there may be disclosures which, by law, you must report to the appropriate authorities.

CONSENT *

- Consent is **active**, not passive.
- Consent is based on **choice**.
- Consent is **not manipulated**.
- Consent is **not coerced**.
- Consent is **not submission** due to fear.
- Consent is **freely given**.

* Source: Canadian Red Cross. “What's Love Got to Do with It? Everyone Deserves a Healthy Relationship.” *RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention*. PowerPoint presentation. Slide 15. 2008. Reproduced with permission.

REFERENCES



For additional information on responsibilities in relationships and consent to sexual activity, refer to the following resources:

Canadian Red Cross. "What's Love Got to Do with It? Everyone Deserves a Healthy Relationship." *RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention*. PowerPoint presentation. Slide 15. 2008.

Canadian Red Cross Youth. "What's Love Got to Do with It? Relationship Violence Prevention Program for Youth." *RespectED Programs*. <www.redcrossyouth.ca/respected/programs.html>.

Department of Justice Canada. *Frequently Asked Questions: Age of Consent to Sexual Activity*. 12 Dec. 2008. <www.justice.gc.ca/eng/dept-min/clp/faq.html>.

Klinik Community Health Centre. Teen Talk Program. *Relation Shifts*. DVD and Facilitator's Guide. Winnipeg, MB: Klinik Community Health Centre, 2007. The Facilitator's Guide is available online at <www.teen-talk.ca/RelationShifts.html>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Rights and Responsibilities in Intimate Relationships

Now that the class has examined rights and responsibilities within a healthy relationship, including the issue of consent to sexual activity, have the class develop a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for someone in an intimate relationship.



Refer to RM 3–HR: Bill of Rights and Responsibilities.

