

For Adults: Relationship Realities

Understanding how young people interact in relationships today is crucial to starting the conversation around healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships.

We've broken it down into three steps; feel free to add more steps as you identify the specific needs, interests and realities of the young people in your community.

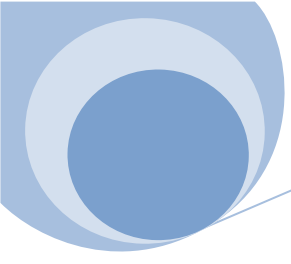
Step 1: Know that Young People “date” differently!

It's true, “old school romance” is not very popular among young people anymore. Students in high school mock the idea of flowers and cards, so how *do* they express romance? Through technology? Sending pics? Social media statuses? Every young person shows their affection and goes public with their relationship in different ways. Remember some relationships don't go public at all and that's okay too!

Here's a list of relationships we know of:

Committed	Two people who are with each other for an extended period of time. Duration depends on age. Big on status, labels and public displays of affection.
Casual	At least two people who like each other, talk often but don't abide by labels or status.
Open	The epitome of no strings attached - usually involves multiple partners or the idea that people in this relationship can explore other people sexually, romantically and not be considered a cheater.
Hookups	Often used with older youth, however this can be used to define a kiss, having sex or being with someone just once, no strings attached.
“Just Friends”	A relationship that may be more than casual, but they don't want people to know about it. Usually involves some form of romance to make it more than your general friendship.

Break the Cycle inspires and supports young people to build healthy relationships and create a culture without abuse. Our dynamic and diverse team believes that all young people deserve to live in a world where they can thrive. Our values and work centers young people and their lived realities, leadership, vision, and hopes for the future.



Step 2: Check Your Perceptions!

Let's be honest, as caring adults we sometimes have a case of the "eye rolls" when we hear about how young people interact in relationships. We may even hear or say the words "puppy love" BUT all that does is set us further away from effectively engaging youth in creating healthy relationships.

We have to be vulnerable sometimes, and step out of our comfort zones in order to truly reach young people. You've learned a lot about relationships since you were 15, but think about what questions you had at that age. Checking your perceptions will ensure you have an effective relationship talk. Challenge yourself to work *with* them instead of just talking to them or at them.

Helpful tips:

1. **Try not to judge**, blame or make assumptions about their relationships.
2. **Be open and honest** about not knowing or understanding something; they'll be happy to explain it.
3. **Create safer, welcoming spaces** when working with youth or talking about sensitive issues. Make sure the room matches the supportive tone of the conversations – like a coffee shop or your living room couch. Also consider having "fidget toys" available like playdough or rubix cubes.
4. Be resource friendly, but **don't overshare**. Know your local resources and encourage young people to use them; keep it to no more than three help services.

Step 3: Ask & Listen!

Ask your student or child how they define relationships. You might be surprised by what you hear...even if you're a "Teen Whisperer" and know all the lingo already, check out our #TweakUrSpeak activity and infographics at www.facebook.com/loveisnotabuse.

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