

Facilitator's Guide



**Center for Young Women's Health:
The Teen Safe Curriculum - For Girls 12-15 Years Old**
www.youngwomenshealth.org/teensafe.html

Phaedra Thomas, RN, BSN, Lorraine Freed, MD, MPH, Cara Colgate, MSW, LCSW, Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD, Judith Siegel, MSW, LICSW, Jessica Tsai, Moira Traci, Maria Robinson, Freedom Baird, MS, S. Jean Emans, MD, and peer advisors, Taphath Giles, Ana Louise Leary, Chantelle Ransome

**Center for Young Women's Health
Children's Hospital Boston
Harvard Medical School's Center of Excellence in Women's Health**

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Introduction

Healthy relationships are a crucial part of adolescent development and individual growth. As children grow into adolescents, they become increasingly reliant on peers for friendship, intimacy, and validation. Some children enter their teenage years poorly prepared for the challenges of developing strong and healthy relationships that will form the basis of adult life. Girls, in particular, struggle with finding a balance between seeking acceptance from peers and maintaining their sense of individuality. They can be at risk for dating and relationship violence, and they are exposed to new and potentially unsafe social situations as they venture out beyond familiar environments. Similarly, on the Internet, girls can be at risk as they explore new websites and chat rooms. This project was undertaken to address many of these issues and to support girls 12-15 years old in their quest for healthy relationships. The materials included in this curriculum will help them build the negotiation and decision making skills to recognize and avoid unhealthy relationships and social interactions.

As part of a ground-breaking initiative from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office of Women's Health, the Children's Hospital Boston Center for Young Women's Health (CYWH) and the Harvard Medical School's Center of Excellence in Women's Health undertook a year long project to create information guides and interactive quizzes for the Internet and to design a four-module curriculum targeted for use with community groups serving girls 12-15 years of age. The mission of the Center for Young Women's Health is to improve the health and well being of adolescent girls. To meet our goal of promoting healthy and safe relationships for girls and enhancing their ability to help their friends and to seek out supportive adults, we surveyed the literature, obtained educational materials and curricula, reviewed Internet sites, and obtained critical insight from experts in the field and from youth. We wanted to raise awareness about the many kinds of relationships these girls would have with family, friends, and significant others, how to recognize unhealthy relationships, and how to build the positive relationships that would be important for their lifetimes. Each module in the curriculum was pilot-tested with community youth groups from diverse backgrounds. The outstanding CYWH peer leaders facilitated these presentations, and feedback was incorporated in an iterative process over one year. The modules include: *Healthy Relationships*, *Safety in Relationships*, *Safety on the Streets*, and *Safety on the Internet*. This *Facilitator's Guide* is

comprehensive and offers background information for each module—*Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Facilitators, Safety Issues, Tips for Effective Presentations, Getting Started, Resources, and an Evaluation Form*. The information guides on each topic and the quizzes are posted on the Internet at: www.youngwomenshealth.org/teensafe.html . It is our intent that icebreakers, group activities, and discussions will stimulate thoughtful dialogue among the group facilitators and the teen participants. We have provided background materials and helpful tips for each module to guide leaders through this process.

Background

Healthy Relationships

Learning to build healthy relationships is a critical part of adolescence. Adolescent girls relate to others in ways that are different from when they were younger children. They are able to empathize with others, share in mutual relationships, experience both feelings of independence and dependence within a relationship, trust others, and communicate more easily in times of conflict. They develop the capacity for intimacy, mutuality, and empathy (1-3). In designing this curriculum, we have identified five major elements of healthy teenage relationships to emphasize in the module:

- **Respect and Trust:** Having confidence in someone else's honesty and intentions and valuing this person.
- **Mutual intimacy:** Sharing so that each person feels both close to the other and good about oneself.
- **Caring and Empathy:** Showing concern and caring towards someone and being able to relate to how that person is feeling. Putting oneself in the other's shoes.
- **Communication:** Being able to express feelings or thoughts to the other person and being able to talk about misunderstandings, differences, and arguments.
- **Self-awareness/Self-worth:** Getting to know oneself, how one feels about things, and feeling good about oneself.

Teenagers mature at different ages, and girls between 12 and 15 are at varying stages of pubertal, cognitive, psychological, and social development. Some girls will have started their menstrual cycles at age 10; others start their periods at 14 or 15. Some girls start dating at age 13 or 14; others at 17 or 18. Girls in this age range will be interested in different activities or social engagements at different times depending on their personalities and interests. In addition, family values and neighborhood social norms vary tremendously and thus influence and shape girls in different ways. Because healthy relationships take many forms, we have included examples and discussions on friendships as well as dating relationships. This allows teens with no experience in dating or decision-making to understand the concepts by building on their experiences with friendships and family relationships. It should be kept in mind that young teens are “concrete” thinkers and the ability to think abstractly requires maturity. Therefore, specific activities are targeted to older or younger age groups within the range of 12-15 year olds. This module will assist girls in understanding the essential qualities of a healthy relationship and should provide them with the tools needed to envision these same qualities as essential in intimate relationships. This module also prepares them for the serious discussions in the *Safety in Relationships* module.

Safety in Relationships

Dating and relationship violence is a major problem for many teenagers today. Approximately one in ten high school girls has experienced physical violence in a dating relationship. A survey of over 13,000 U.S. 9th to 12th grade students (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance 2001) found that 9.5% (9.8% for girls and 9.1% for boys) had been physically hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the preceding 12 months (4). Analyses of data from the large National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that 13.7% of 11-13 year old girls, 19.6% of 14-16 year old girls, and 27.2% of 17-21 year old young women had experienced verbal or physical abuse by a partner in the previous 18 months (5). The consequences of relationship violence for teenagers are serious and include sexually transmitted diseases, accidental pregnancy, future violent relationships, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and even death (6-8). Unfortunately, most teenagers do not report this violence to adults.

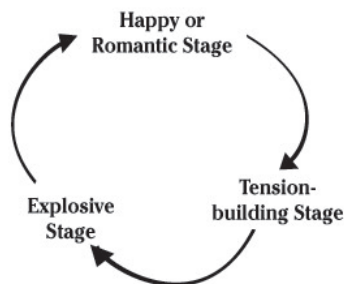
When we talk about violence against teenagers in dating or other relationships, we use a variety of terms including abuse, intimate partner violence, partner violence, dating violence, and relationship violence. When referring to teens in dating relationships, we recognize that some teens will be involved in same-sex relationships, and we have tried to use terms that are

inclusive. There are four major types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse** includes behaviors such as hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, pushing, pulling hair, throwing things at or using a weapon against a partner.
- **Emotional or mental abuse** includes behaviors such as humiliation, threats, and intimidation to control one's partner. The partner/friend may control how and with whom the other person spends their time, limiting what they can wear, checking up on them frequently, and making them feel that they cannot leave the relationship.
- **Verbal abuse** includes name-calling, verbal threats, and any other use of words to commit abusive acts against a partner. Verbal abuse is closely linked to emotional abuse.
- **Sexual abuse** includes sexual acts that are forced upon an individual against their will.

When we refer to teen dating violence, we are referring to a situation in which a teen is physically, emotionally, verbally, or sexually abused by a dating partner. Frequently, teen dating violence is not an isolated event but a pattern of abusive behaviors committed by a dating partner. This pattern is called the “*Cycle of Abuse.*” This common pattern of violence has specific stages:

Cycle of Abuse



The first stage is the happy or romantic stage; the second stage is the tension-building stage, and the third is the explosive stage. In the happy/romantic stage, the relationship seems to be going well, and the partner is loving and attentive. This is followed by the tension-building stage, in which there is increasing conflict. The explosive stage is when the actual abuse takes place. After the violence, the abuser often asks for forgiveness and promises he or she will not do it again, moving the cycle back into the happy/romantic stage.

In this module, girls learn the elements of making a safety plan, such as letting parents and friends know about the situation, carrying a cell phone or change for a telephone call, calling 911 if threatened, being knowledgeable about resources, and being with friends or relatives in public places. Teens learn to recognize patterns of abuse, to respond appropriately, and to access resources for both themselves and their friends. Because of the number of activities and the seriousness of the subject matter, facilitators are encouraged to spend at minimum one 90 minute session or two 60 minute sessions on the topic and to include a professional such as a social worker or mental health counselor in the co-facilitation (see section on *Safety Issue in Facilitating Groups*, page 10).

Safety on the Streets

As teens venture out from their protected home environment to new social opportunities and interactions, they may be confronted with decisions about unsafe situations and experience pressure to use drugs and alcohol. Learning the role of peer pressure and how to make good decisions to avoid health risks is a critical part of adolescence. Developing the skills to assess the environment is essential, whether at a party or lost in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Creating a safety plan with parents, including code words to obtain help, and locating valuable community resources are part of the process. This module builds on the goals of the previous module and assists teens in identifying “safe” and “risky” activities. Teen girls are challenged to figure out what they need to stay safe in a variety of situations: letting others know where they will be, carrying cash and bus tokens, having emergency numbers and a cell phone, taking a self-defense class, and asking for help from store owners or a police station.

Safety on the Internet

Close to 100% of teens have access to the Internet, and 50% of teens use the Internet to access health information. The “information highway” has changed the lives of everyone by creating opportunities to shop, talk to friends, send photos, and do research on-line. Most of us would agree that the Internet has changed our lives for the better, yet this new technology presents us with new and unexplored areas of risks and challenges, as teen girls are the most vulnerable group to be taken advantage of by Internet stalkers. With this in mind, this module builds on the lessons learned in “*Safety on the Streets*.” Teens will think of the Internet as a potentially unsafe neighborhood and thus will learn relevant skills that will allow them to respond to risky situations in chat rooms and other areas in cyberspace.

Sharing personal information or passwords is a frequent mistake that teens make. After chatting with a stranger who expresses interest in the teen, she may feel like she actually knows the person and may agree to a meeting, which can put her in danger. Writing an Internet contract reinforces all of the safety concepts by planning ahead and thinking of rules and strategies to stay safe.

Knowing how to extract reliable information from the Internet is hard enough for adults, but for teen girls it can be overwhelming. It is critical for teen girls to recognize the difference between accurate and inaccurate on-line information. In this module, emphasis is placed on learning the skills to evaluate the reliability of the information on various Internet sites. Through group activities and thoughtful discussions, young girls will be empowered to take control of their Internet experiences.

FAQs for Facilitators

How many modules are there and is it necessary to complete all of the modules in order?

This curriculum consists of four modules: (1) *Healthy Relationships*, (2) *Safety in Relationships*, (3) *Safety on the Streets*, and (4) *Safety on the Internet*. Although each module stands alone, we strongly recommend that all of the modules be completed in their entirety, and most importantly, in consecutive order. For example, in Module 1, girls will learn about healthy relationships and gain the knowledge and skills for understanding the more complicated issues that will be discussed in the modules that follow. Dating violence is a very complicated issue to discuss with teens who are new to both decision-making and dating. Because teenagers mature at different ages, we have included examples and discussions on friendships as well as dating relationships. After participating in Modules 1 and 2, teens will get better at recognizing unhealthy relationships and learn to avoid them, leave them, ask for help from a parent or trusted adult, or help friends who are involved in abusive relationships. Modules 3 and 4 explore additional lessons that include staying safe in unfamiliar neighborhoods and then applying that knowledge to unsafe areas in cyberspace.

Can the modules be implemented with diverse teen groups?

Yes. We recognize that this curriculum will be used in many different settings and may involve teenagers from different cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We encourage facilitators to add discussions and scenarios that are relevant to the teens who are participating.

Is it necessary to have a mental health professional or social worker facilitate the modules?

With the exception of *Safety in Relationships*, it is helpful but not necessary to have a mental health counselor or social worker to facilitate or co-facilitate the modules. Because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter in Module 2: *Safety in Relationships*, we feel that it is very important to have a professional such as a social worker or domestic violence advocate, with experience in talking with teens about dating violence, lead the group or be present during the activities and discussion. This professional can also help to field questions and offer information on local resources. In addition, parents should be encouraged to communicate with their teens about their values and expectations, provide guidance about safety and relationships, get to know their teenager's friends, and provide supervision during non-school hours.

Is the material on relationships gender neutral?

Yes. Dating violence affects males and females, as well as people of all ages, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic groups. Therefore, it is very important that the facilitator be sensitive to the language that is used. Language should be gender-neutral (e.g. partner instead of boyfriend or girlfriend) and should include examples of relationships involving teens from different ethnic groups. It is also important to point out that females are not only the victims of abuse, but can also be the perpetrators.

Are the modules appropriate for teens living in nontraditional households?

Yes. We recognize that there are many kinds of families today and that some youth live in foster homes, with grandparents, or in residential placements. Family members and other adults may serve as “parents” in teens’ lives, and for simplicity sake, we have used the word “parent(s)” in this guide to refer to those people.

How long are the modules?

Each module is designed to take 1-1.5 hours with the exception of *Safety in Relationships*, which takes a minimum of 1.5-2 hours to complete. If a facilitator and the group would like to spend more time on modules, additional activities have been included. These modules can also be spread over two sessions, or a longer single session to include more activities. For example, in Module 1: *Healthy Relationships*, this 1-1.5 hour session should include: establishing ground rules, 1 icebreaker, 1-2 activities, 1-2 role plays, and 1 closing activity. In Module 2: *Safety in Relationships*, essential elements are noted as CORE activities. Other activities may be added to this module and thus would extend the time frame. The amount of time that it takes to complete each activity is noted in each module under “estimated time.” The facilitator may select more or less activities depending on time availability.

Is there anything a facilitator can do to prepare before presenting a module?

Yes. Before undertaking a module, facilitators should read each of the information guides specific to the topic and complete each quiz located at www.youngwomenshealth.org/teensafe.html. The module should be read carefully and completely to assure that all the preparation indicated is done in advance of the presentation. The reproducible materials for the activities are in appendices at the end of each module for ease of copying. The facilitator should become familiar with the local resources in the community where the presentation takes place to offer all group members contact numbers and preferably a handout with information, following the program.

What are the basic components of each module?

Each module begins by giving the facilitator a quick review of the purpose of the module and also clearly identifies the “goals” or what participants are expected to learn. The facilitator and participants set ground rules, then choose 1 ice-breaker, 1-2 activities, and finally a closing activity. A snack before, during, or after the activities is a welcome treat. Feedback can be obtained at the end of the session, if desired (a sample *Evaluation Form* is included at the end of this guide). The *Healthy Relationships* module also has an optional pre-session activity and a post-session activity.

Are there any activities a group can do after the module to reinforce the material?

Yes. Post-session or “booster activities” often reinforce the lessons learned in each module and can be added by choosing one of the activities that was not previously selected. These activities can be offered to ongoing groups to promote lasting positive skills.

Safety Issues in Facilitating Groups

The facilitator needs to be sensitive to the developmental stage and life experiences of the group. It is important that the facilitator encourages teens to involve their parents or another trusted adult if concerns arise about issues discussed in this curriculum. In any program that addresses abuse and violence, it is possible that at least one group member will have had experience with these issues in her own life. It may not feel safe to that group member or other members to discuss personal issues in the group. It should be stated to the group at the beginning that the group discussions will not involve personal experience with abuse or violence. In addition, the group should understand that any personal issues that may come up should not be discussed with anyone outside the group. We have included national domestic hotline numbers as well as websites that relate to adolescent health. However, it is crucial that the group leader have on hand a list of local resources which include mental health clinics, domestic violence programs, and rape crisis clinics to give to all the group members at the end of the Module 2: *Safety in Relationships* session. The leader must also be familiar with state mandatory reporting laws for child abuse in the event a group member discloses abuse by a family member or other person.

If a group member discloses abuse or violence in the group, the leader should redirect the group conversation after gently telling her that she should stay after the group to discuss this further. The facilitator can then make sure that the group participant knows about local resources and can facilitate outreach and involvement of trusted adults and parents.

Getting Started

1. Set the Ground Rules

Most adolescent groups have rules for behavior to ensure that the groups run in an orderly way with respect and support for all group participants. The group should take 3-5 minutes at the beginning to talk about ground rules.

The facilitator can begin by asking the group members what ground rules they think are important and write them up on a chalkboard or large piece of paper or posterboard. ***If the following basic rules are not covered, the facilitator should be sure to include them:***

- 1) Respect other group members and their answers
- 2) Listen to others. Do not interrupt.
- 3) Keep things general, do not bring up private or personal information.
- 4) Pay attention to everyone, and avoid private conversations.
- 5) No name-calling or put-downs.
- 6) Do not discuss personal information from the group with people outside of the group.

All group members are encouraged to sign or initial the list of ground rules. The ground rules should be displayed for the duration of the module for all group members to see.

Pre-session Activity for Module 1: Healthy Relationships - This module is the only one that includes an optional activity that may be done prior to the actual module in preparation of the activities and discussion that follow.

2. Choose an Icebreaker

Decide on an icebreaker for each module. Icebreakers take about 10 minutes and are a good way to “ease into the group” and allow participants to become comfortable with each other, the group process, and the topics. The icebreakers in each module have been carefully chosen for each section be-

cause they complement the group activities; however, most icebreakers are nonspecific and can be used with any module or carried out independently.

3. Choose the Group Activities

Decide on the activities that you will present based on the age and size of the group, estimated time of the activity, materials needed, and the amount of preparation involved. Each activity has an objective listed that briefly states the purpose of the activity. CORE Activities, noted only in Module 2: *Safety in Relationships*, are essential activities that should be included in the presentation

4. Choose a Role Play(s)

Role plays can be an excellent way for teens to get actively involved in planning strategies for dealing with conflicts in relationships. With the exception of Module 4: *Safety on the Internet*, all modules have role plays outlined with scenarios, options for responses or endings, and questions to prompt an interactive discussion between the facilitator and the participants. Most of the role plays require 2-3 volunteers to act out the scenario. Typically, adolescents enjoy volunteering for these activities; however, experienced Peer Leaders who have been trained to co-facilitate groups can be excellent at performing the role plays as well. ***Follow these easy steps to engage teen girls to act out potential real life situations:***

- Choose the necessary number of participants/volunteers or peer leaders to play each character and to act out the scenario.
- Actors are given a few minutes to read the scenario to themselves, decide on who will play each part and then quickly discuss how they are going to act out the role play using their own words for the script.
- The role play is acted out for the entire group.
- The facilitator leads a discussion regarding the possible options/outcomes in the situation.
- The facilitator can use a real or toy remote control to assist in discussion. A participant or the facilitator can “pause,” “rewind,” or “fast-forward” during the role play to encourage discussion at various points.

5. Choose a Closing Activity

Closing activities prompt participants to recall the information that was presented during each module. This is an excellent way to wrap up each module and reflect on the many concepts that were presented. Each module has at least one closing activity.

Post-session activity for Module 1: Healthy Relationships - This module is the only one that includes an optional activity that may be completed following the program to reinforce the theme and goals of this session.

Tips for Effective Presentations

- ✓ **Read the materials before presenting the modules.** This will help you to feel relaxed and confident.
- ✓ **Choose the activities with your particular group in mind.** While the material is generic, you know your audience best and have the ability to modify all of the activities and role plays, etc. so that the content is both effective and sensitive.
- ✓ **Try not to lecture or use an authoritative manner.** While it is important to set ground rules and guide the discussions with appropriate feedback, teen girls respond best to a nonjudgmental approach. Using this style will do wonders to stimulate lively and honest discussions.
- ✓ **Help participants to recognize inappropriate behaviors.** There will likely be at least one participant who openly disagrees or challenges the facilitator. For example, a group member may view certain behaviors, such as name-calling, as funny or may see other behaviors, such as jealousy, as loving. The facilitator should point out the characteristics of healthy relationships, as discussed in Module 1, and help the group members understand that just because a behavior is common it is not necessarily okay.

- ✓ **Obtain the assistance of professionals whenever possible.** Whenever possible, utilize the expertise of a social worker, mental health counselor, nurse or other trained professional. For example, some state police departments have a special unit dealing with computer forensics and provide community groups with guest speakers on Internet safety.
- ✓ **Respect the values and opinions of every participant.** While the curriculum is meant to empower young girls and ultimately improve their decision-making abilities, values and beliefs are strong and will not be changed over the course of a 1 or 2 hour presentation. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. Ongoing open discussions will help young girls to recognize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and will also give these young women the opportunity to make healthy decisions about their safety.
- ✓ **Keep talking.** Remember that these modules are meant to begin a discussion about safety. Communication should not stop here. In addition, encourage and motivate your group to explore other areas of staying safe such as wearing protective equipment for sports, etc.

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Dating Violence Curricula

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Hotlines

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- The National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- The Youth Crisis Hotline 1-800-HIT-HOME (448-4663)

Websites

<http://www.4girls.gov>
www.youngwomenshealth.org
www.cyberangels.org
www.cybersam.org/for/parents.asp
www.katiet.com
www.hncnet.harvard.edu/coe
www.helping.apa.org/warningsigns/reasons.html
www.childrensafetynetwork.org
www.safestate.org/index.cfm?navID=133
www.loveisnotabuse.com/home.asp
www.wvdhhr.org/bph/trust/trust-to.html



Evaluation

Please help us to improve our presentations by giving us your comments.
Thank you!

Topic:

Date:

Presenters:

1. Did you like the presentation? Why?
2. Did you like the icebreakers?
3. Did you like the activities?
4. Do you think the presenters were prepared?
5. List 2 key points you remembered from the presentation?
6. Do you have any suggestions for the speakers to improve the program?