

SECTION 8

DEVELOPING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

OBJECTIVES:

The student will:

- Examine the various kinds of love.
- Evaluate dating and healthy dating practices.
- Identify the stages of intimacy.
- Recognize the benefits of marriage and the characteristics of both a healthy and an unhealthy marriage.
- Review personal reasons to commit to abstinence by making a pledge of abstinence.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Computer/Projector
- Handouts: Dating: The Big Question (8B.1), Stages of Intimacy (8C.1), & Planning for a Healthy Marriage (8E.3); optional activity: Creative Dating Challenge (8B.2)
- Cards for (8C)
- CD with Section 8 Masters: What is love? (8D.1) and Characteristics of a Marriage (8E.2) and Marriage PowerPoint® (8E.1)
- Notecards for Notecard Knowledge
- Abstinence pledge cards

PREPARATIONS:

1. Print copies of Handouts and Parental Interaction.
2. Locate the Section 8 PowerPoint® & Masters; set up equipment.
3. Prepare cards for 8C.
4. Gather notecards and abstinence pledge cards (one per student.)

ORDER OF PRESENTATION:

1. Using the teacher background in Relationships (8A), discuss the information concerning the benefits of marriage and intact families.
2. Go over the content of Dating: The Big Question (8B) and then give the students Handout: (8B.1). Allow about 10 minutes to fill it out. Lead a class discussion by following the directions as given on (8B). Students are to take (8B.1) home to discuss with their parents/guardians. The bottom portion is to be torn off, signed, and returned to the teacher.
3. Optional activity: Creative Dating Challenge (8B.2).
4. Read through the teacher background on Stages of Intimacy (8C). Follow the instructions and suggested script (8C). Assign Handout: (8C.1) as homework.
5. Discuss the content of What Is Love? (8D), brainstorm, and then continue with the suggested script. Show Master: What Is Love? (8D.1) and continue the discussion.
6. Present the PowerPoint® Marriage (8E.1). A teacher script has been provided. Assign Handout: (8E.3) as you discuss Master: Characteristics of a Marriage (8E.2).
7. Distribute pledge cards as you discuss Will You Choose Abstinence? (8F).
8. Distribute notecards for Notecard Knowledge.

REMINDER TO STUDENTS:

- Homework assignments:
 - Dating: The Big Question (8B.1)
 - Stages of Intimacy (8C.1)
 - Planning for a Healthy Marriage (8E.3)
 - Parental Interaction: Section 8
- Cards for Notecard Knowledge

RELATIONSHIPS (8A)

TEACHER BACKGROUND:

The dynamics of relationships are a challenge that most will encounter. Relationships determine many of the decisions that students make. They will also shape the students as they prepare for life. It is imperative that we equip students with the basic skills they will need to pursue healthy, successful relationships in all aspects of life. As they encounter romantic relationships, it is critical that they have a clearer understanding of what constitutes a healthy, successful relationship.

Many studies have demonstrated the benefits of marriage for both married adults and children in the marriage. Some of the benefits for married couples include:

- Lower mortality (death) rates (better health, live longer)
- Less risky behaviors
- More monitoring of health (see the doctor more)
- More sex
- More satisfaction with their sexual lives
- More savings and higher wages
- Twice as likely to be happy
- Less domestic violence
- Less likely to attempt suicide¹

The marital relationship is also beneficial to children of an intact family. Consider this:

- Serious child abuse is less likely in married families.
- Children from single parent and broken families are more likely to end up in jail as adults.
- Adolescents in married families are less likely to be depressed.
- School expulsion is less likely among children in married families.
- Children in intact married families are less likely to repeat a grade.
- Developmental problems are less common in two-parent families.
- Children from divorced families are more likely to have behavior problems.
- Adolescent marijuana and cocaine use are more common in broken families.
- Weapon-carrying, by adolescents on drugs, is more common in broken families.
- Adolescents from divorced families are more likely to smoke cigarettes.
- Adolescents are less healthy in broken families.
- Teenagers from intact married families are less likely to be sexually active.
- Adolescents from broken families are twice as likely to look favorably on having children out of wedlock.²

¹Waite, Linda J. and Maggie Gallagher. The Case for Marriage. New York: Doubleday. 2000.

²Fagan, Patrick, Robert Rector, Kirk Johnson, and America Peterson. The Positive Effects of Marriage: A Book of Charts. The Heritage Foundation. Washington, D. C.: April 2002.

Based on data from various studies, there is overwhelming evidence for the need to teach students about relationships. It just makes sense to teach the dynamics of relationships since most students will get married at some time in their lives. "Ninety-three percent of Americans rate 'having a happy marriage' as either one of the most important or very important objectives. When asked to select their top 2 goals, a majority of Americans included a happy marriage as one of the choices, far outpacing such other life goals as 'being in good health' (35%) or even having 'a good family life' (36%)...Only 8% of American women consider remaining single as ideal, a proportion that has not changed over the last generation."¹ Furthermore, since many teens do not have someone close to them with a healthy marriage, it is key to provide teens with a standard they can emulate. Many of the teens participate in unhealthy relationships because they aren't aware that relationships can be happy and fulfilling. This section will serve to make them aware of that by focusing on dating relationships, boundaries within the relationships, and the benefits of marriage.

Choosing to remain abstinent until marriage sets teens up for the best chance of having a successful marriage. That is why we should also make sure teens are given the facts supporting the benefits of marriage and are guided to develop the necessary skills to foster such a lifestyle. Interestingly, teens themselves recognize that they should not be sexually active. "Close to 6 in 10 teens (58%) surveyed recently said sexual activity for high school-age teens is not acceptable, even if precautions are taken against pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases."²

This section will begin with activities concerning dating relationships and conclude with facts about and characteristics of healthy marriages. Students will also be given the opportunity to sign a card pledging abstinence until marriage or to renew their abstinence pledge.

¹Waite, Linda J. and Maggie Gallagher. The Case for Marriage. New York: Doubleday. 2000, 3.

²"Fact Sheet: The Cautious Generation?: Teen Sexual Behaviors and Attitudes." The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Jan 2003. 1 Sept 2003 <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/reading/fact_sheets/cautfs.asp>.

DATING: THE BIG QUESTIONS (8B)

TEACHER BACKGROUND:

This first activity encourages the students to define what is an appropriate date. Encourage the students to be truthful and to discuss this matter with their parents/guardians. Be aware that the students in the classroom will have a wide range of ideas and experiences concerning dating. There are some students who have not begun to date, some who are experimenting with dating relationships, some who are seriously involved with a boyfriend/girlfriend, and others who are only involved in casual sex. Considering the health risks, casual sex practices should be discouraged.

Going out with a group of friends is a common practice for many teens. This helps teens improve social skills by interacting with a number of other adolescents. Teens have the support of their close friends as they learn how to converse and behave in new relationships. As the teens learn more about other people's reactions and behaviors, they are also learning about themselves. They may discover certain character traits that they admire in others and would like to emulate. These types of interactions aid the teens as they begin to modify their behavior and mannerisms in response to these social situations.

As students get older, most of them will move from wanting to be in groups into wanting to single date. In order to prepare for a dating relationship, students should begin to define their expectations, sexual boundaries, and partner standards. Through various social interactions in the classroom and in their extracurricular lives, students can begin to recognize the character traits that are appealing to them. Once on a date, a teen may realize that this person is not really what he/she had expected. The two may not get along as well as they had originally anticipated. The relationship may not progress any further. The teen has just further defined his/her boundaries/expectations. With each date, a teen learns more about him/herself and others.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Start by distributing the Handout: Dating: the Big Questions (8B.1). Allow time for the students to briefly answer the questions. Continue with a group discussion on the questions and their answers. It will be interesting to see how students' answers are similar or different from what they think their parents' perspectives will be. The bottom portion of the handout has a place for parents to sign in an effort to promote communication between parents and teens. Students can return the signed portion for possible extra credit. Time permitting, conclude by encouraging the students to complete the optional activity Creative Dating Challenge (8B.2) and then share with the class their ideas for creative dates. This handout may also be assigned as homework. *Answer keys for (8B.1) and (8B.2) are not provided.*

Suggested script: As you encounter a variety of people in different social settings, you are learning about relating to others. While sitting at the movies, eating in a restaurant, or talking with a new friend at lunch, you are observing others and deciding which character traits you admire in them. These social scenes will eventually provide you with the basic understanding of the qualities you expect in a date, if and when you date. Dating is supposed to be a fun, learning experience. When you date someone, you are

finding out if that person is interesting or annoying. By dating you are developing personal standards for other people you will date in the future and for the spouse you will eventually marry.

Dating relationships begin to take on more meaning as you grow older. It is interesting to consider, however, that the dating relationships you have as a teen may affect your marriage relationship later in life. An obvious example would be if you became infected with an STD such as herpes. Later in life, when you do get married, you could pass this STD to your new spouse. On the other hand, you may date someone who treats you respectfully and politely. This type of dating experience will lead you towards finding a spouse who will treat you in the same manner. It will also teach you how important it is to treat others with respect. These positive dating experiences can serve as stepping-stones toward having a happy and fulfilling marriage some day. Most Americans (92 %) said that having a successful marriage is very important to them.¹ In another survey, 81% of adults said that having a good marriage is absolutely necessary for them to consider their life a success.²

As we work through this section, we will identify the various benefits of marriage. Today, however, let's start with a dating situation. It is important to have a plan for dating. By having a plan, you are prepared for the situation. You are less likely to end up in a dangerous setting or in a situation that probably wouldn't end well. Dating, whether it is casual or more serious, can be a very emotional situation. If a date doesn't go well, a person may feel emotionally hurt or rejected. When a date does go well, however, the couple involved can be caught up in an emotional high. Either way, you should identify your boundaries or expectations before the date begins. It is important to communicate these with the person you are dating. We sometimes expect other people to read our minds. By firmly expressing your boundaries and expectations with your date, each of you will have a clear understanding. This conversation should also include where you are going and with whom you will be associating. Clear communication can alleviate misunderstandings and reduce the likelihood that you will become involved in a risky situation.

Let's get started. I will give each of you a Handout: Dating: The Big Questions (8B.1). Take the next 10 minutes to complete the questions. You will answer each question from your perspective and your parents' perspectives. After the allotted time, we will discuss your answers as a group.

(After allowing time for the students to complete the Handout (8B.1), review the questions using the following answers as a guide.)

Question 1: Where would you like to go on a date?

The places and types of dates you go on will have a great influence on exactly what you do on a date. For example, if you go to a movie on a first date, how much will you really learn about the person you are dating? In contrast, if you decide to go out for ice cream

¹ "The Family, Marriage: Highly Valued." Public Perspective, Wirthlin Worldwide, (Feb/March 1998):17.

² "Money and the American Family Survey." Research, Strategy, Management & Belden Russonello & Stewart for American Association of Retired Persons. (Jan. 23 - Feb. 21, 2000). 52.

or go rock climbing, you will have more time to carry on a conversation and learn about your date.

There are some places or settings that you should avoid while on a date- places like either of your homes when your parents aren't home, dark secluded places that might otherwise be used as a make-out spot, or any place that might involve risky behaviors. It is good to stay in public places or with groups of friends whom you know. This will help you avoid getting into an awkward situation. You and your date should always have a plan. Can you think of any other places you might want to avoid with your date?

Question 2: Whom will you be around on your date?

This may sound like an odd question; however, those people you are around can greatly influence what happens on your date. For example, if you go with a group of people you don't know to a location you are unfamiliar with, you could find yourself in an uncomfortable situation. The people present might start drinking alcohol and might later begin to pair off in couples. This could lead to crossing boundaries that you had not intended to cross. Know the people with whom you are associating because they could end up influencing you. It is always wisest to avoid these types of risks. Making one poor choice oftentimes leads to making other poor choices.

Question 3: What are some of the rules that should be followed when dating?

It is important that you ask your parents or guardians what their rules are for you concerning dating. The rules they give you are to protect you and not to take away your fun. You might want to ask your parents what they think the ideal dating situation is for you. If you do not have a parent or guardian you feel comfortable asking, discuss this with a trusted adult. Try to put yourself in your parents' shoes. Imagine that you are the parent with a teen going out on a date. What guidelines would you want them to follow?

Question 4: What are the ideal characteristics of a person you might date?

It is important for your parents/guardians to approve of and to get to know your date. Most parents/guardians want the very best for you and want to make sure you are safe. Many parents encourage their teens to bring their dates to meet family members before the date begins. This allows the parents and the date an opportunity to get to know each other and to discuss rules and expectations. If you are trying to hide the person you are dating from your parents, you need to consider why. Hiding something usually means that you are doing something wrong. If you are afraid or embarrassed to introduce someone to your family, why are you dating this person? If you were to become serious with this person, they would eventually be spending a great deal of time with your family. Are you ready for that to happen?

Question 5: How can you date on your limited budget?

You probably don't want to date someone who you feel is only interested in you based on the amount of money you spend on them. Dates should not revolve around how much money is spent but on the quality of the time you spend together. Someone who really cares about getting to know you will be more impressed with the thought you put into the date rather than the amount of money spent. However, it is better to spend a

little money on a planned date than to have no plan and end up doing things you may regret, such as having sex.

Continue the discussion by asking, “How did your answers compare with what you think your parents’ answers are for these same questions?” (*Spend some time discussing the possible discrepancies or similarities in the answers.*) Inform the students that Dating: the Big Question (8B.1) has a place at the bottom of the form for their parents/guardians to sign. Ask the students to take the papers home to their parents/guardians and discuss the answers with them. Then, the students should remove the bottom portion and return that part to class. It will be interesting to see if the students answer the same way that they think their parents will answer.

***If time permits, continue with the optional activity: The Creative Dating Challenge student handout (8B.2), or issue it as a homework assignment.*

DATING: THE BIG QUESTIONS (8B.1)

HANDOUT



DIRECTIONS: Imagine that you are getting ready to go on a first date with someone you have wanted to date for some time. Keeping in mind the importance of this first date, answer the following questions from 2 different perspectives, yours and your parents/guardians.

Questions To Consider	My Perspective	My Parents'/Guardians' Perspectives	Same or Different? Why?
Where would you like to go on a date?			
Who will you be around on your date?			
What are some of the rules that should be followed when dating?			
What are the ideal characteristics of a person you might date?			
How can you date on your limited budget?			

My son/daughter, _____, and I discussed the above questions on (8B.1) concerning dating. When my teen is ready to date, he/she will have an action plan with established boundaries and expectations.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

WHAT IS LOVE? (8D.1)

MASTER

EROS	Sexual love, often called attraction or infatuation Conditional Self-centered Unforgiving Demanding For the here and now
PHILIA	Friendship Best friends Expect feelings to be reciprocated Have an affinity for or a strong attraction to
STORGE	Familial love such as the love between parent and child Love felt for brothers and sisters Love for pets
AGAPE	Unconditional love Unselfish love, given freely Described using words like forever, unchanging, giving, trustworthy, kind, accepts the good and bad about the other person, wants the best for the other person. A person who is loved unconditionally feels accepted, treasured, challenged, free, and appreciated in a relationship.

**What is your definition of love?
What type(s) of love do you want in your future?**