

Lesson three: Unhealthy relationships

Ages 14–16

+ Lesson overview

This is the third of four lessons, focusing on empowering and supporting young people as they develop relationships. This lesson explores the features of unhealthy relationships, the effects of abusive behaviours and how people can access support.

Learning objective

To learn how to recognise abusive behaviours in intimate relationships, and how people can seek support for themselves or others.

Learning outcomes

Young people will be able to:

- Identify unhealthy and abusive behaviours and explain why these are wrong.
- Explain how people who experience abuse may be affected.
- Describe how people of any gender who perpetrate or experience harmful behaviour can access support.

Resources

- Box or envelope for questions
- Resource 1: *Silent debate* (1 per class with questions written onto A3 pieces of paper)
- Resource 2a: *Three diary entries Group A* (1 per pair, for half the class)
- Resource 2b: *Three diary entries Group B* (1 per pair, for half the class)
- Resource 2c: *Emotion cards* (support – 1 per pair, as required)
- Resource 3: *Teacher support sheet*

Lesson summary

Activity	Description	Timing
Introduction	Introduce learning objectives and outcomes and reinforce ground rules.	2 mins
Baseline assessment	Conduct a silent debate about abusive behaviours in relationships and seeking support.	10 mins
Diary entries	Respond to questions about one of two versions of diary entries about an abusive relationship, looking from the perspective of different characters.	15 mins
Circles of support	Identify how different groups including friends, family and schools, might help someone experiencing abusive relationship behaviours.	10 mins
Challenging perceptions	Compare different attitudes to the diary entries based on the sex of the character.	10 mins
Reflection and endpoint assessment	Focus on the character of a friend observing abusive relationship behaviours and decide whether they agree with a range of statements.	10 mins
Signpost support	Remind the class how to access further advice, guidance and support about abusive behaviours and relationships.	3 mins

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson. These include guidance on ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, relevant subject knowledge, communication and handling questions effectively.

Keywords

Consent, coercion, pressure, abuse

Baseline assessment

➤ Introduction – 2 mins

Negotiate or revisit ground rules for the lesson. Emphasise that the ground rules apply during the silent debate activity in the same way they would any other discussion or activity. Explain that the class can put questions in the question box, either anonymously, or with their name on if they would like to have a follow-up conversation with you.

Introduce the learning objective and outcomes. Explain that today's lesson will explore the features of unhealthy relationships, the effects of abusive behaviours and how people can access support.

Before starting the lesson, ensure that:

- the silent debate topics are displayed around the classroom
- you have read **Resource 4: Teacher support sheet to support whole class discussion in the Challenging Perceptions activity.**

➤ Baseline assessment – 10 mins

Conduct a silent debate by placing around the room large A3 sheets with prompt questions on them (see Resource 1: *Silent debate*). In response to the questions, the class should move around the room silently and write ideas onto the sheet.

The young people are allowed to:

- respond to the question by explaining their idea or viewpoint
- respond to an idea or viewpoint someone else has written (either agreeing or disagreeing)
- ask a question or respond to a question written by someone else

You may wish to circulate around the room and supervise comments during this activity.

To gain an understanding of beliefs, prior knowledge and misconceptions, summarise the main themes from their responses. Using this baseline information, adapt the lesson's teaching and discussions to promote progress and address potential stereotypes.

Core activities

➤ Diary entries – 15 mins

Split the class into two groups: Group A and Group B.

Tell them that, throughout the lesson, they are going to look at two completely different scenarios of abuse in a relationship, with an opportunity to share their ideas as a whole class at the end. It is important that they only work with members of their own group until instructed to do otherwise.

- Hand Group A Resource 2a: *Three diary entries Group A*
- Hand Group B Resource 2b: *Three diary entries Group B*

In pairs, ask the class to read the diary entries from three different characters talking about the same event. These diary entries are intended to be difficult to infer from, as controlling behaviours and relationship abuse are often difficult to interpret for those involved, particularly as the indicators can be very subtle to begin with. As a result, the class may need support to interpret the background story behind the entries.

Ask the class to respond to the questions on Slide 4. They should write down their answers and keep these safe until later in the lesson.

Support: Hand out Resource 2c: *Emotion cards* and ask the young people to place cards into piles to describe the emotions of each character. Some emotion cards may not be appropriate for any character and should be discarded.

➤ Circles of support – 10 mins

In pairs, ask the class to draw four concentric circles as illustrated on Slide 5, and label them 'Friends', 'Family', 'School' and 'Other'.

Ask the class to focus on either Alina or Bradley (the young people can focus on either character regardless of their group in the prior activity, as the target of controlling behaviour and the perpetrator need different types of support). Thinking about the four groups, ask the class to reflect on how they might know that the characters need help.

They should then annotate in each circle what each group might say or do to help the characters in the situation they are in. Explain that 'Other' might include sources of online support (such as Childline), the police, or youth clubs.

Support: Focus on the character speaking to a trusted adult like a parent or teacher, and a source of external support, such as a police officer or Childline. Suggest what the character might say to ask for help, and how the trusted adult and source of external support might help.

➤ Challenging perceptions – 10 mins

Reveal that both Group A and Group B have been given the same scenario with Alina and Bradley's roles reversed as the person displaying the controlling behaviour and the person impacted by the behaviour.

Using Resource 3: *Teacher support sheet* to guide discussion, as a whole class, explore if groups had a different perception of the abuse and of the relationship depending on whether the person displaying the controlling behaviour was male or female. Ask the class to share their answers to the Diary Entries activity.

Key learning:

- The groups may have had very different perspectives on the relationship depending on whether the person being abused was female. If so, it is important to explore these attitudes and why they exist.
- NB: The young people may wish to further discuss their views on gender identity. While this is a related topic, it is important to focus the learning in this lesson on the impact of controlling and harmful behaviours that can affect people of any sex, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Alternatively, the groups may have made similar decisions regardless of whether the person experiencing the abuse was male or female. In which case, it may be useful to identify that attitudes have not always been this way in the past, but that people's understanding and beliefs are changing around experiences of abuse in relationships, including abuse in same sex relationships, and towards people who are non-binary or trans.
- Controlling and/or coercive behaviours are not acceptable in any relationship and are against the law.

Plenary/assessment for end of learning

➤ Reflection and endpoint assessment – 10 mins

Ask the class to privately reflect on the role that friends can play in recognising abuse in someone's relationship and seeking help on their behalf.

In small groups, the class should decide whether the statements about Jamie's perspective on Slide 7 are true, false or whether they are unsure. Groups should feed their responses back to the whole class.

If it does not come up in discussion, explain that even though there are things holding him/her back, Jamie does want to help their friend and would not want to see them hurt or unhappy. Even though it can be hard, friends should try to seek support for one another. Remind the class of all the skills, actions or language that are available for Jamie, as already identified in the circle of support activity.

➤ Signposting support – 3 mins

If the young people need advice on what they have discussed in the lesson or have concerns, signpost them to support at home or in school (such as parents, carers, tutors, and head of year).

- Childline: childline.org.uk 0800 1111
- Refuge: refuge.org.uk – support services for women and children
- Women's Aid: womensaid.org.uk – support services for women
- Standing Together: standingtogether.org.uk – support for both men and women
- Mankind: mankind.org.uk – support for men
- Galop: galop.org.uk – support for LGBT+ people
- Respect: respect.uk.net – support for people displaying harmful behaviours

Extension activity

Choose one of the charities from the Signposting Support section of the lesson and create a fact file on this charity. The fact file should include:

- What services are offered.
- Who they provide services for.
- Why someone should contact the charity.
- How they can be contacted.