

With safe environment, we consider how we keep all our children, youth and teens safe. Adults are responsible for protecting young people. Young people can be empowered and encouraged to learn ways to avoid unfavorable situations, to stop when feeling unsafe, say “no” and tell a parent or a trusted adult so they can help. To build positive, healthy relationships, we need to develop an understanding of how to create and maintain relationships – with God, with ourselves, and with others.

### Relating in Relationships

When research was being done to look at the larger topic of healthy relationships and unhealthy relationships, there was such a volume of information on the topic. One could develop a whole year’s curriculum, which even then would not cover the life relationships that need to be addressed.

It has been the belief that children should be taught the skills to:

- Get along with others
- Be a friend
- Be part of a social group

People assume that children know how to interact with one another in positive ways, but what actually occurs challenges this belief. The potential for meanness, both in and out of the classroom, is taking on new and more creative forms. Children are much more likely to talk back to their parents, teachers and other adults. These adults seem to tolerate, and implicitly condone, a greater amount of negative behaviors. It follows that students are demonstrating increased aggressiveness, reduced respect for adult authority and insensitivity to the feelings of others.

Research shows that children learn what is considered acceptable social behavior by observing adults, siblings, peers and older schoolmates. . . By the third grade, most students have already developed normative beliefs about how to function in a social environment, and these beliefs guide future behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Healthy relationships are something all parents want for their children. In pre-school, children are taught basic manners, how to be a good friend, and how to play well with others. In elementary grades they learn about bullies. In the middle school, the “talk” about puberty often becomes the priority.

While it is very important to have the discussion about sex, parents should also have “the talk” about love in order to protect children from unhealthy relationships. According to the Centers for Disease Control, one in ten high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend. By teaching children the key elements to healthy relationships, teens and young adults are more likely to have healthy long-lasting relationships.

<sup>1</sup>The Ophelia Project. *Let’s Be Friends, Elementary Curriculum Gr. 2-3*. 2007. page 3-4. [www.opheliaproject.org](http://www.opheliaproject.org).

<sup>2</sup>Pittman, Robin, MS, CHES. *How to Talk with Kids about Healthy Relationships*. Jan. 16, 2018. Poe Center for Health Education.

<sup>3</sup>Weissbourd, Richard. Ed.D., *For Families: 5 Tips for Guiding Teens and Young Adults in Developing Healthy Romantic Relationships*. Oct. 2018. Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/5-tips-parents-guiding-teens-healthy-romantic-relationships>

According to a report from Making Caring Common, “large numbers of teens and young adults are unprepared for caring, lasting romantic relationships and are anxious about developing them. Yet it appears that parents, educators and other adults often provide young people with little or no guidance in developing these relationships.” Harvard psychologist Richard Weissbourd conducted a survey and found that 70% of the 18-25 year old participants wanted information from their parents about the emotional aspects of romantic relationships, and 65% said they wanted to learn about the emotional aspects of relationships in their sexuality education classes in school. In other words, while most parents, schools, and educators are discussing abstinence, how to avoid pregnancy, and preventing sexually transmitted diseases, kids want more. Children want to know about how to love and be loved. You cannot talk about one without the other.<sup>2</sup>

In the above mentioned study conducted by Harvard psychologist Richard Weissbourd, one teen reported, “All we are taught is how to prevent stuff, how not to get pregnant. We should be discussing the values that should guide you in love and how to really love and respect someone else. And how to be loved by someone else. That’s a lot more important.”<sup>3</sup>

The lack of modeling and conversation in both homes and schools create a void. How is it filled? Do we leave it to media and entertainment? To peers? How do **we** respond? We, with our faith and scriptures, can help our children and youth in the relationships they form in their lifetime. The Church desires to help guide them, if we give them the resources to use, and model with healthy relationships, including the relationship with our God.

**Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.**  
~1 Corinthians 13:4-7

*Reflection for Catechist* ~ Reflect on the relationships in your own life. How can you show the Christ within you to others? What will be your first step?  
\*With God...  
\*With yourself... \*With youth \*With others...

## Overview

This lesson is designed for use during a class session in January/February. “Relating in Relationships” looks at ways that our faith can support us in our relationships to work on healthy, positive, and holy relationships rather than unhealthy relationships. God has given us the 10 Commandments to be a guide in our lives. Following them can guide us in building healthy, holy relationships, as well as bring us true happiness. God created each person in His own image; therefore, our dignity is grounded in God and must be respected by all. God tells us to treat each other with respect. As we learn and mature in building healthy relationships with others, we will have many experiences and opportunities to practice our beliefs and faith as we build the relationships we want in our lives. We may need help if we are in an unhealthy relationship where we are being exploited or are not free to express our thoughts, feelings, and actions. An environment of open communication encourages youth to communicate their thoughts and feelings appropriately and seek help from parents and other trusted adults when they feel others are hurting them or pressuring them to break the rules.

**“Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything.”**

~ Pope Francis

**“Do not use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.”**  
- Ephesians 4:29

**Goal:** God created us in His image to live with others in loving and peaceful ways. We do this by having a personal relationship with God, obeying his rules, and treating others with respect and dignity. We build healthy relationships using our gifts and talents in positive, loving ways.

### Session Outline

- Opening Prayer (2 min)
- Review prior knowledge of term *relationship*; explore variety of relationships. (5 min)
- Brainstorm/share qualities and actions found in healthy friendships vs. unhealthy friendships (14min)
- Share/Discuss friendships in more details, including how adults can help, as well as our Faith. (14 min)
- Activity: “A Recipe for Friendship” (2 copies). Do one in class; other do as Jesus as the Friend (home). (20 min)
- Closing Prayer— Praying for our Friends (5 min)

### I. Opening Prayer (2 minutes)

Heavenly Father, we come before You asking you to help us be faithful to prayer for our relationships. You have not created us to live life alone. We ask for healthy, positive relationships, and in our difficult relationships, we ask for healing. Help us to wait patiently while You work. Give us a heart of wisdom. Help us to look inside to see where we may need to change so that our relationships may be better. In Jesus name, Amen.

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### Session Objectives:

- God created us each in his image, and we deserve respect and dignity. This refers to both words & actions. God made us to have healthy relationships with others.
- To discuss healthy and unhealthy qualities and actions that may be in friendships; our Catholic Faith teachings and the Ten Commandments can guide us.
- Students will choose their own criteria for a healthy friendship through the activity.
- If we are in a relationship where we are being exploited or are not free to share our thoughts, feelings and actions with others, we need to get help.
- Experience praying for our friends.

### Resources:

Canadian Centre for Child Protection. Be Smart, Strong & Safe; Grade 5&6 Lesson Plan 2. [http://www.smartstrongsafe.ca/pdfs/SmartStrongSafe\\_LessonPlan\\_2\\_Grade\\_5-6\\_en.pdf](http://www.smartstrongsafe.ca/pdfs/SmartStrongSafe_LessonPlan_2_Grade_5-6_en.pdf). Materials have been altered from original form; please see website.

### II. What Are God’s Rules?

*A Reference for the Lesson —*

**Share with the class:** “God gave Moses the 10 Commandments to help guide our lives and how to show our love to God and others. (Exodus 20: 1-17)

Other guides that Christ has given us through Scriptures and our Catholic Teachings include:

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy (Mt. 25:31-46)  
Catholic Social Teachings  
The Beatitudes (Mt. 5: 1-12)

### Supplies

- Pens or pencils for each member
- Blackboard/whiteboard/ or chart paper—for T-Chart
- Whiteboard markers / chalk for above

**Activities / Hand Outs** - for each person, 2 copies:  
Pg. 5 Activity Worksheet “A Recipe for Friendship” to complete as directed in class. Second copy is to take home and complete with Jesus being the ‘friend.’

### III. LESSON: Relating in Relationships

#### Introduction

**Opening Activity:** To review their understanding, **ask** children: (1) What comes to mind when I say the word 'relationship'?; (2) Does a relationship always have to refer to two people dating?; (3) What are various types of relationships people can have? (examples: family members, relatives, husband/wife, friends, teachers, classmates, coaches, church members, priest, neighbors, and God/you). Write their responses on the board/large sheet of paper **Ask:** Do you have the same relationship with each person listed, or may it vary? When God created us in His image, He also created in us to be social and live with others. He wanted us to have loving relationships with others through our lives, but especially a relationship with God who always loves us and desires what is best for us. What is your relationship with God? How might it change as you grow?

**Share:** For our lesson, we will focus on the relationship of **FRIENDSHIP**. We will look at two types of relationships—healthy friendships and unhealthy friendships. (Teacher—see pg.4 for additional support to lesson). Healthy friendships are respectful on both persons' part, and being respectful involves our words as well as our actions. As we explore healthy friendships we must also take a look at unhealthy friendships. **Create** a T-chart for the class to see, labelling it on top "Healthy Friendships." On the left side (under the top bar) write "Would Want," and on the right side, "Would Not Want." **Ask** children what **qualities** they would want (or not want) in a friendship with another person. Ask them which column would their quality go under, and write it on the board/paper. Then **ask** the class to think of **actions** in friendships —things people do to show a healthy friendship, or do that are signs of an unhealthy friendship. Use the same process as you did with the qualities in a friendship. When done, replace the words "Would Want" with "Healthy" and "Would Not Want" with "Unhealthy." Leave the chart up for activity later.

**Share/Discuss:** Are you a good friend? What do you do to show others you can be a good friend? *Allow them to share their thoughts.* When we feel loved and positive about our life, we are more likely to draw friends that are good for us. As a saying goes, "*we teach people how to treat us.*" Is this what God shows us; when He teaches us to love Him and others (our neighbors)? Through healthy communication, you can show you respect the other person, listening to what they say, being honest with them, and talking with them about your thoughts and feelings. Good friends try to encourage each other. They do not tease or call a friend names, but use their words carefully. If one is upset or angry, instead of shouting and acting out with bad behavior, friends will talk about it and try to solve the problem.

When needed, one can always ask an a trusted adult for help in solving problems. Adults can help you learn how to make good decisions based on your values. They can also help you identify dangerous situations (smoking, vaping, sexting, alcohol, drugs, stealing). Parents can also help you to give you an excuse to get out of something if peers are pressuring to do something you don't want to do, or if something does not feel right to you and you want to leave the situation.

Another part of being a good friend is to learn about building empathy; understand that other people have their own feelings and also get to make their own decisions. We need to take turns when doing activities. If you want to use something that is not yours, you need to ask permission of the person it belongs to. Taking something from another without asking can hurt them. One's actions affect others; it is important to think of others when we say and do things. As we make decisions about our responses to others and our actions, we can always refer to what we have learned from our Catholic Faith—especially using the Ten Commandments as our compass.

When one is learning to respect boundaries, an important aspect of this is understanding that when someone says "no" to something, it means "no" and the person needs to stop. For example, if someone tells you, "you should never touch someone if they tell you not to," this is to be respected and you should not touch them. This goes both ways. If you say no, you should be heard and respected as well. If you ever feel uncomfortable, have said no, and they do not listen, you should go to your parents or a trusted adult and tell them about it.

### IV. ACTIVITY: Friendship Recipe Activity

For **each** youth member make **2 copies** of the activity pg. 5 "A Recipe for Friendship" for them to complete. For the first one, they may refer to the T-Chart made earlier in this lesson giving examples of the qualities and actions that are found in healthy relationships (friendships). Have them choose which 5-6 **qualities** they think are best for their "new" friend. What **actions** go best with those qualities for the "steps" of the recipe?

If students finish in time, you can ask if anyone wants to share their recipe with the others! This can be as a summary of tonight's lesson and what they have learned. The second sheet they are to take home, and do the same process—only this time, Jesus is your "friend." What are his 5-6 best qualities as a friend to you? What actions does He do for the "steps" in the recipe? What is your response to Him as a friend?

**V. CLOSING PRAYER** - See bottom of page 4 for this section of the lesson (next page).

## T-Chart Examples

Teacher: Draw from the following examples to help the class generate responses for the T-Chart

### WOULD WANT / HEALTHY:

Someone who respects themselves and others

Someone who you can laugh with

Someone you can learn from

Someone who is a good listener

Someone who is understanding

Someone who is supportive when you have a problem

Someone who is encouraging

Someone who includes you in a group and doesn't leave you out

Someone who does not tell other people what is shared in confidence

Someone who cares about you and helps you stay safe

Someone who is reliable and dependable

Someone who is trustworthy/keeps their word

Someone who respects your boundaries (if you do not want to do something they do not pressure you)

### WOULD NOT WANT / UNHEALTHY:

Someone who does not listen

Someone who is mean to you/makes fun of you

Someone who talks about you behind your back

Someone who leaves you out

Someone who lies to you

Someone who pressures you to do things you do not want to do

Someone who does things that are not safe

Someone you cannot trust

Someone who does not respect your boundaries

Someone who is selfish

Someone you cannot rely on

Someone who does not support you

Someone who tells others things you share with them in confidence

Someone who gets you into trouble

## V. CLOSING PRAYER

Have members of the class gather together for final prayer. **SHARE:** Tonight's lesson on healthy friendships can make us think of our friends, so tonight's closing prayer will be for our friends. Then **LEAD** the prayer —

Dear Lord,

We praise you for the wonderful ways you have created us.

We thank you for coming to earth and showing us how to live, and dying for our sins.

Tonight we have been working on friendships. Each one in the class may now think of a friend they would like to pray for; without speaking, think of that person and follow along:

- One friend you are thankful he/she is in your life; place their name in your heart. Ask Jesus to bless them for being in your life. (pause 15-20 seconds)
- One friend who you know is in need of help— to get well, with a problem, or to overcome something that may be making them sad or angry. Place their name in your heart; ask Jesus to comfort and heal them so the friend can be all He has made them to be. (pause 15-20 seconds)
- Now please place Jesus in your heart. He always wants to be there with you as a friend full of love, compassion, and mercy for you. Ask him what you want from Him for yourself. (pause 15-20 seconds) When you are done, then ask Him what he wants from you. Listen quietly for his response. (pause 30-40 seconds)

Lord Jesus, we place all of our friends in your loving hands. Please help us each day to show your love through us in our words and actions. Help us to be friends to others, especially to someone who is lonely. We ask this in your Name. Now say the **OUR FATHER together. AMEN.**

# A RECIPE FOR FRIENDSHIP

This is your opportunity to bake up the perfect friend. Create a "Friendship Recipe" telling someone else how to be a good friend. Include the "ingredients" (qualities) of a friendship and the "recipe" (steps) for being a good friend or making new friends.

List the friendship ingredients you will include!

Ingredients List:

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Now, add the "recipe" (steps) for being a good friend.

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*Remember to encourage the good 'ingredients' in your friends!*

Any serving suggestions?

This week we discussed the Right Relationship concept of Relating in Relationships. We are created in God's image; therefore, we have a divine dignity to be respected by ourselves and others. Parents, the first teachers in the "domestic church" at home, will guide and mentor the child in learning their faith and the world they live in; all of this is involved in our relationships.

As parents, we teach their children to prepare them for adult life. We give lessons on manners, and treating others with respect. We also need to instruct them about relationships—the different types of relationships we all encounter in our lifetime as we grow and mature, and how each may be different. Our faith and values are shared when we visit and have discussions to help guide them to reflect on relationships—what makes it a healthy, loving, and holy relationship rather than an unhealthy relationship where one wants control of the other, or to meet only one's own needs. If we commit to giving the time and attention needed to build these life skills of healthy relationships, based on our faith, would this not change the divorce percentages, and show that cohabitation does not provide the true covenant our Lord wants for his people and their happiness? Our goal, with all working together, is to teach key elements of healthy relationships, so our youth may have healthy, long-lasting relationships.

Healthy relationships differ by the level/type of relationship - acquaintances, relatives, friendships, dating, or intimate relationships. However, some common behaviors that all healthy relationships have and value are:

**SELF KNOWLEDGE** as an individual. They need to find value in who they are; to know their strengths and weaknesses. They need to know they have the power to make choices, and by making good choices for themselves, they in turn find value in who they are. They choose the behavior, and the consequence can be positive or negative. In reading stories, they can look for the cause/effect (consequences) that may be similar or different from theirs.

**PERSONAL BOUNDARIES** are something every person needs to establish to feel safe and secure. They also help protect against sexual and physical abuse. Help your child to identify and articulate their personal values and boundaries, and they are to be respected and reinforced. Do they understand that the other person's boundaries need to be respected as well?

**BALANCE** is another important behavior for youth to learn. It is important to teach your children that it can be healthy to have many friends in many places. They may need help to understand that spending time with one friend does not mean you do not like other friends. Youth may need your help with this issue. Youth need to learn to balance between the relationships and the responsibilities in their lives such as school, chores, other commitments, and other relationships.

**RESPECT** is a must. It is essential for both individuals to be respectful in both communications and actions. We show it by how we treat our self and others. This exhibits acceptance and understanding of each other.

**COMMUNICATION** is essential. When communication is used that is respectful, honest and direct, both parties feel heard and understood. Although all relationships will experience conflict, healthy communication based on understanding will find common ground. When communication is heated, partners may need a "time out" and agree to address the issues at a later, calmer time.

**DIGITAL ABUSE** occurs when a person uses technology devices improperly to harass or harm another person. It opens the door widely to many unhealthy behaviors. They include: constant unwanted calls or texts, harassment/cyberbullying on social media; sexting—pressure to send nude or private pictures or content, using forms of social media to send insults, monitor whereabouts, control other relationships, or to pressure their partner for their passwords to social media sites and emails.

**RESILIENCE** is important when relationships do not work out, or end. They need to be able to recover when valued relationships fall apart. They need healthy coping skills to deal with the disappointments that ending a relationship can cause. As positive role models, parents can provide support and assistance in this area.

These are not the only behaviors for creating healthy relationships; nor is the learning a "one-time" event. The list of behaviors goes on, and the opportunities are endless if we are attentive in our children's lives. Hearing about your child's day and school is a great starting place for conversation. Watching TV programs, and pointing out or asking questions about the relationships being viewed can teach which portray real life and which are acting in telling a good story; current events are good for discussions as well. Listening to your child's view in all they share will give you a picture of how they may handle difficult situations ahead—and where they may need guidance. Youth also assistance in how to create and sustain healthy relationships. Daily youth are bombarded with many unhealthy behavior models from the internet, media, society, and even families and peers. We need to give them tools based in faith and values to reflect on their options and making sound, healthy, holy choices.

Our children can find great guidance on relationships by the growth of their faith life. They need to understand the importance of a healthy, personal relationship with Jesus. Parents encourage this relationship by teaching prayers to their children, family prayer, including the rosary. In time, the relationship builds stronger with personal prayers, through the Mass and sacraments, the Scriptures and the parish family. As they mature in faith, their relationship with our Lord needs to grow deeper through their life.

To view Winter Lessons 2019 for youth: <https://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/safe-environment/young-peoples-safe-faith-environment-program/>

ADAPTED SECTIONS FROM:

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