



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS LESSON

The US-based National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health) conducted a study of thousands of school children in Grades 7 to 12. They found that 80% of those 14 and over were or had been in a romantic relationship. When family members and caregivers can normalize teen relationships, youth are more likely to frame their perspectives in the context of their own relationships. Here is an at-home lesson to help you initiate dialogue with your young people about relationships:

Materials you will need:

1. 10 blocks
 - a. (Make paper blocks at home: bit.ly/2YuK5zO)
2. Markers or Pens

1. With your child, discuss and define healthy and unhealthy relationships. Please also consider some of these important notes about relationships:
 - **Healthy relationships**- involves healthy communication and boundaries; egalitarian in nature; supportive; respectful
 - **Unhealthy relationships**- based on power and control; isolating
2. Now, discuss with your child ten characteristics that are important for them to have in a healthy relationship. Allow them to take the lead here. Please consider family values, ethics, etc. Here are some ideas:
 - Personality, ambition, respect, loyalty, honesty, independence, physical attraction, communication, optimism, intimacy, self-love, boundaries, consent (not just with regards to intimacy-think access to private information such as social media passwords)
3. You will need the blocks for this step. Write one of the chosen characteristics on each block.

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4. Working with your child, invite them to build a pyramid out of the “characteristic blocks”. The bottom four blocks should resemble the foundational characteristics of a healthy relationship. As you build the pyramid, the blocks near the top of the pyramid will have less importance in a relationship. Note: this does not mean that the characteristics are not valuable for a healthy relationship. And, there is no wrong answer 😊

5. When the pyramid has been created, discuss with your child why the characteristics were chosen for the foundation.

6. Next, invite your child to choose ONE of the characteristics from the foundation that they think is the MOST important. Instruct them to do this and not worry about saving the pyramid from collapsing.

- If the pyramid collapses, discuss how this is symbolic of a relationship that is missing honesty or loyalty, for example, or whichever characteristic they have chosen.
- If the pyramid doesn't collapse, discuss some of the reasons why the couple may still choose to continue in that relationship.
- Some of the reasons may include: love, fear (of being alone or their partner if abuse exists), children, finances, comfort, etc.

7. Finally, remind your child that they deserve to have EVERY characteristic available to them in each of their relationships. Discuss steps that a young person could take if their relationship does not involve all their identified characteristics. Also, please provide them with information about www.loveisrespect.org as well as local resource, such as Safe Berks and the virtual Health Resource Center provided by Berks Teens Matter.

