



HEALTHY CHOICES, HOPEFUL FUTURES

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO AWARE

HIGH SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

Parents, Grandparents, and Caregivers,

Thank you for allowing us to educate your teenager about healthy relationships, safe boundaries, and sexual risk avoidance.

We're thrilled to have the opportunity to educate, equip, and encourage your child to think and plan for a healthy future. We look around today and see that our youth are suffering not just from the physical consequences of risky sexual behaviors (although those are very real), but also from the emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual and financial results of these decisions. Teens need strategies to plan for their future while being aware of cultural influences that model little commitment and unhealthy relationships.

Through the AWARE program, using the Love Notes curriculum, we aim to empower your child with the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy choices for a hopeful future. At the same time, we know that your involvement is key to their success.

If you wish to continue the conversation at home, we made this guide as an overview of what your child is learning. They will have prompts they will come to you with after each presentation. We hope these will spark further communication with your child because your role is crucial!

Sincerely,

Connie Peacock
AWARE Program Coordinator
aware@life-options.org





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Day 1

Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

We ask students how they view most relationships these days. They are encouraged to work on being healthy first. They are given a personality profile to see what type of a person they are so they can understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Students identify characteristics that they see in healthy relationships, and list ingredients they hope to see in each stage of a relationship. The emphasis is placed on the foundation being strong, taking time to develop. We then contrast a relationship that starts fast physically with sex which can lead to an unhealthy foundation.

The brain chemistry of love is examined, and how this can cloud the reasoning process in relationships. We use a glass with glitter to explain how it is hard to see warning signs in relationships with these strong feelings blocking our sight. Students are encouraged to wait until these brain chemicals settle to see clearly.

DISCUSSION

- Find out what personality they relate to most and see if they can guess yours.
 - Ask them what song they think expresses love.
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Day 2

Love vs. Infatuation – A Low Risk Decision Model

Students are given information about the differences between love and infatuation playing a game where they rate certain qualities as one or the other. We discuss the three sides of love: chemistry, friendship, and trust/ commitment.

Seven principles of a smart relationship are shared to help them be aware of these qualities as they develop relationships: 1) Seek a good match. 2) Pay attention to values. 3) Don't try to change a person into someone else. 4) Don't change yourself just to keep someone's love or friendship. 5) Expect good communication; willingness to work at it. 6) Don't play games, be phony, pressure, or use someone. 7) Expect respect. Have standards for how you will be treated.

A high-risk vs. low-risk decision model is explained to the students to use in relationships, emphasizing to slow a relationship down and really take the time to get to know someone. The study called The Success Sequence is explained to them showing the impact of timing relationships to set them up for success.

DISCUSSION:

- Tell them which of the 7 Principles for a Smart Relationship are the most important to you.
 - Let them know which of the principles would have been useful to you when you were younger.
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Day 3

Recognizing Abuse, Consent, and Refusal Skills

Students are taught what dating violence looks like, the statistics of how common it is, and what the early warning signs are in abusive relationships. They watch a video and are asked to explain which signs they see in the fictional couple. Several resources are made available for students to use if they or a friend needs help in an abusive relationship.

Sexual assault is explained, and the role consent plays in relationships. Students watch a video, *Tea and Consent*, that uses the metaphor of making tea to explain the concept of consent. The influence of drugs and alcohol are discussed as a major factor for risky behaviors and assault. Students are given a chance to wear “drunk goggles” to see how this affects them. Finally, students are given some refusal skills to use if they are being pressured to do risky behaviors.

DISCUSSION:

Choose one:

Read though *Worried About a Friend?*

Or, *What Does Consent Mean?* And discuss with your teen.

Day 4

Real Intimacy and Drawing Boundaries

On this day we discuss 6 different types of intimacy: verbal (talk), emotional (feel), social (interests), spiritual (values), commitment (trust), and physical (touch). We rate a fictional couple's intimacy in all areas and how connected they are.

We discuss Ebony's story: AJ and I started going together junior year. We had lots of fun and could talk about anything. Our relationship was not like the superficial ones around us. After graduation, I got the opportunity to travel and work abroad, but AJ didn't want me to go. I started realizing I wasn't ready for that level of commitment. I wanted to go to college and travel. Am I ever glad I stuck to my boundaries in high school. It would've been so easy to think sex was okay because we had a good relationship. But what if I'd gotten pregnant? And what if we'd taken it to that level? Would I have been too emotionally involved to leave? As it turned out, we broke up two months later. I learned from the experience and left with no regrets.

We talk about emotional risks of sex too soon. Students learn the hormone differences that can affect physical intimacy, and how physical intimacy is tied to all types of intimacy. The levels of physical intimacy are discussed, and students are encouraged to set safe boundaries.

DISCUSSION:

- Together discuss the 6 dimensions of intimacy and the story of Ebony.
 - Let your teen know your thoughts about the benefits for Ebony of deciding to leave sex out of her high school relationships.
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Day 5

STDS

On this day, STD transmission is discussed, and the possible long-term effects. To illustrate how easily STDs are transmitted, a swapping water demonstration is done that shows that you cannot tell if someone has an STD just by looking at them. The instructor puts a drop of ammonia in a few cups. Students swap their clear water with three students, then the instructor reveals who has the “infection” by putting a chemical in their cup that turns pink if they received the infection.

Students play a Kahoot! quiz to learn how HIV is transmitted. Then students watch a video, *Who Do You Know?*, and discuss the myths seen in the video. Students are encouraged to not have sex as the 100% most effective way to protect them from STDs, pregnancy, or a broken heart.

DISCUSSION:

- **Ask your teen what surprised them most about the lesson.**
 - **Look over the STD fact sheet with your teen.**
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Day 6

Contraception Methods

Students start the day by playing a dice game that illustrates the failure rates of condoms. Depending what they roll, they will see different consequences based on typical failure rates. Then they are given information about all the major contraception methods and their typical failure rates. They watch a video, “How Contraception Works”, that explains conception and birth control in further detail. Abstinence is emphasized as the safest and healthiest choice.

The video, “*Toothpaste*” from Scenarios USA is viewed and discussed. The video contrasts two high school relationships. One couple communicates well, and the girl’s boundaries are respected. In the other relationship, the girl is pressured to lower her boundaries and she is too intimidated to use the condom she purchased. The boy stops talking to the girl and she ends up getting pregnant. We discuss why she made the choice and if her emotions would have been different even if she had used the condom and not gotten pregnant.

DISCUSSION:

- Talk to your teen about someone you know who had an unplanned pregnancy and how it changed their life.
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Day 7

Media Influences and Relationships

Students begin the day by taking a Kahoot! poll on how media has affected them. They assess how much time they spend on their media devices on average.

Elements of communication are discussed, and how instant messaging can fall short in relationships. The importance of not sharing too intimately on social media is explained. Students watch a video, “*Accidental Bully*” that shows how an innocent text can turn into a serious situation. We also watch a video, “*Cyber Life*” that shows how one teens social media posts are being watched by a potential employer.

Important legal information is shared with the students regarding sexting laws. Students are taught how brain conditioning and imprinting works and students watch a clip from “*The Office*” that illustrates it. Some serious facts about pornography are shared with the students.

DISCUSSION:

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- Read through these two handouts (Resource C *Social Media & Privacy—Myths and Realities* and Resource D *Risks—Social, Emotional and Legal*)
 - Talk about what a person can do if they experience or observe others cyber harassing or bullying.
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HEALTHY CHOICES, HOPEFUL FUTURES

The conversation doesn't stop here! You are the person that inspires your child to make healthy choices, and you play a crucial role in their future.

Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) of young people say it would be much easier for them to delay sexual activity if they have open, honest conversations about this topic with their parents. Statistically, parents have more influence on teens' sexual choices than peers, media, or teachers.

Be encouraged! You are making a difference!

www.AwareOptions.org