

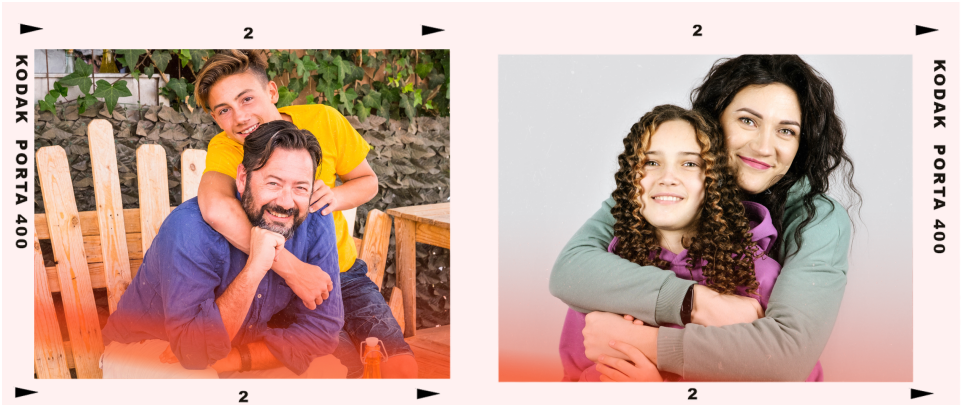


# AWARE

Healthy Choices, Hopeful Futures

## A Trusted Adult's Guide

Middle School



A Publication of Life Options

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 Relationship Smarts 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. Each school district requests different lessons, so ask your student what lessons they are learning each day.

Sincerely,

Connie Peacock  
AWARE Program Coordinator  
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# Analyzing Influences

6TH GRADE	7TH GRADE	8TH GRADE
<p>Students do an activity about carrying “baggage” or influences in their lives. They are given a variety of life experiences and asked to deposit them into a bag labeled: “positive”, “negative”, or “could be either”. We discuss why each could affect us in different ways. Family patterns are examined. Students learn about the warning signs of an unhealthy relationship.</p>	<p>Students are taught how children can be impacted during their first three years of life as well as in utero. They learn how children can be harmed by abuse that occurs in families. Family patterns are examined. The line of respect is discussed in relationships, and three questions to ask themselves whether a relationship is healthy or not.</p>	<p>Students break into groups to discuss how media has changed their lives for the better or worse. Statistics are shared about how too much time online can affect them. Then, students talk about how it has changed relational communication. A video, "Facetime", is shown to illustrate how texting is not the ideal form of communication.</p>



- Ask if your youth is experiencing any pressures to do certain behaviors they know are wrong.



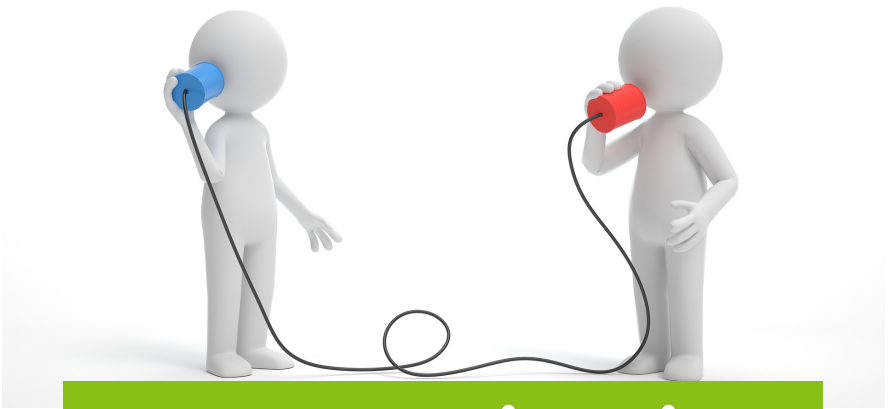
# Healthy Relationships

6TH/7TH GRADE	8TH GRADE
<p>Students discuss what character is and how that can affect choices and relationships. They brainstorm healthy characteristics in relationships. The youth are given a list of questions to think about their friendships.</p> <p>Then, students are walked through situations where they might be pressured to do inappropriate things, and we talk about the different options they have, and which ones would be best. Lastly, students are given a specific situation and they must think through their options and decide the best one.</p>	<p>Students brainstorm healthy characteristics in relationships. They brainstorm ways relationships start, develop and mature and we place those ideas into a relationship pyramid, showing that healthy relationships take time to develop and have very strong foundations.</p> <p>They are encouraged to take relationships slow and focus on the other elements of intimacy: verbal, emotional, social, spiritual and commitment.</p> <p>Consent is explained, and we watch a video, "Tea and Consent", that illustrates the common sense of the issue.</p>



- Ask the youth what characteristics they would expect to see in a healthy relationship.
- Share what characteristics you feel are most important.





# Communication

Students are taught that there are bad ways to complain and good ways to bring up issues. They are taught the **WWA** method:

**W:** What Happened? Focus on the specific behavior that bothers you.

**W:** Where or When? Focus on last time it happened. Avoid “you always...;you never....”

**A:** Explain how it Affected you, made you feel, or why it bugs, upsets you, or makes you mad.

Students observe and then practice the speaker-listener technique with a partner:

**Speaker:**

- Speak for yourself, no mind reading
- Don't go on and on
- Pause, let the listener paraphrase

**Listener:**

- Don't interrupt or disagree
- Seek to understand
- Paraphrase what you hear



- Ask your youth to practice the Speaker/Listener Technique with you.



# Decision Making

## 6TH/7TH GRADE

Students watch a video, "Anger and Stress", and discuss how stress impacts our brain's ability to make good choices. We explain how time outs can lead to healthier decisions, and how to take a timeout. We talk about 4 danger signs that can happen in communication: Put-Down/Invalidation, Escalation, Negative Interpretations, Avoidance/ Withdrawal. We also talk about how hidden issues can cause us to explode if we haven't dealt with those problems. Students are taught how to use the Speaker/ Listener technique to further talk out the problem. We talk about a problem-solving method they can use once they've processed through their emotions.

## 8TH GRADE

The brain chemistry of attraction is explained, and the neurohormones involved. We do an object lesson where glitter represents these hormones and how it clouds our vision, emphasizing that it takes 3-6-9 months for these hormones to settle so we can see the other person in the relationship more clearly. The video, The Science of Love, is shown and discussed. We identify risks they may be taking if they progress too quickly in a relationship. Students learn a high risk vs. low-risk decision model to use in relationships. We end with a game where students must decide the best order for life choices that sets them up for success.

4.



- Ask your student what stood out to them the most.



## 6TH GRADE

Students learn about abstinence and how it can protect their whole health. Students learn what sexually transmitted diseases are, and how they can spread. They are given information about the most common STDs. Students watch a video, "Who Do You Know?", and discuss the myths in the video.

Information is shared about the emotional risks teens may experience in early sexual activity. Students are encouraged to avoid drugs and alcohol to lower their risk of becoming sexually active. They are given an opportunity to try on drunk goggles. Refusal skills are given to the students to practice resisting peer pressure.

## 7TH/8TH GRADE

Students learn about different types of contraception, and how abstinence is the only 100% effective way to protect their whole health. Students learn what sexually transmitted diseases are and how they can spread. They are given information about the most common STDs. Students watch a video, "Who Do You Know?", and discuss the myths in the video.

Students are told a story about a fictional couple and how they progress physically in their relationship. Afterward the students are given an opportunity to decide where they are going to draw the line in physical boundaries. The benefits of marriage are discussed as the safest place for sexual activity.



- Role play with your youth how they should refuse peer pressure.



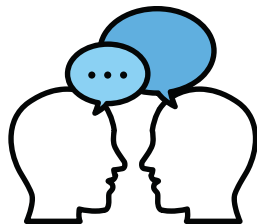


# Violence Prevention



The levels of relational intimacy are discussed, and students are encouraged not to share information that is too intimate on the internet. Students are shown the video "Accidental Bully" and we discuss the pitfalls of oversharing information. The risks of sexting and cyberbullying are discussed. We watch a video, "What Comes Next", that shows a girl pressuring a guy to sext, then the video pans out showing there are two female observers laughing out of the way of the camera. We discuss lines that can be used to counter the pressure to sext. We talk about consequences of sexting.

Students learn how pornography can impact relationships and lead to brain conditioning, causing associations between arousal and images. They watch a clip from the sitcom "The Office" where Jim teaches Dwight to associate the sound of his computer with a mint. Students are given information about the effects of porn. Students watch a video, "The Science of Porn", and discuss how it affects the brain.



6.
  - Ask your youth what's safe to share online, and what's not.



# Dimensions of Health

Students are taught that there are 4 dimensions of health: physical, mental, emotional, and social. The physical brain development is discussed and how the delay in formation of their prefrontal cortex affects them. Regarding social health, we focus on the ability to have self-regulation and impulse control in order to achieve goals. An object lesson is used with a broom where the student tries to balance the broom only looking at the handle, and then attempting to balance it by looking up at the end illustrating that you need to be able to look ahead to keep things balanced. Emotional health is discussed along with a train car activity showing how if we let our emotions lead our behavior, we can end up in a “train wreck” with negative behaviors following.

The study called the Success Sequence is explained to them showing the impact of life milestones, and how delaying children can set them up for success.



Ask your youth what their goals are for the future, both their “up close” (short term) and “far away” (long term) goals.

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!



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