

# Relationships and values

Teacher guidance and lesson plans for secondary age



# Teaching guidance

## Introduction

These lessons were produced by Fastn, an organisation that championed the development of relationship skills in childhood that sustain positive relationships for life. The lessons are in line with *The Principles of Excellence in Relationships Education*, developed by Fastn in collaboration with Family Links, The Centre for Emotional Health, and a group of other relationship organisations and practising educators to identify what excellence in relationships education looks like. The Principles can be used by school senior leaders, RSE leads and teachers to identify what their school is already doing and what more they could do to be providing excellent relationships education. [Download the framework document.](#)

## Feedback

We welcome feedback on this resource. If you are using these materials, please do let us know what you think of them by emailing us: [info@familylinks.org.uk](mailto:info@familylinks.org.uk)

## Guidance for using this resource

These lessons support young people to reflect on their own expectations and values for relationships. Evidence shows healthy, dependable relationships are central to our mental and physical health and life outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Yet, young people say society is failing to help them aspire to, and form, healthy and dependable relationships wrongly assuming they innately know what these relationships look like and have the skills to manage them.<sup>2</sup>

The content of these lessons, for pupils in KS3 or 4, encourages young people to develop conscious awareness of their values, consider where they come from, how they impact on behaviour and how they can be influenced both positively and negatively by external factors, including the media. The content draws on research carried out by fastn and the Media Trust in September 2021 around young people's views on the portrayal of relationships in the media. 61% of young people agreed that the media influences their peers' expectations of relationships.<sup>3</sup>

A key aim of the lessons is to support young people to become agents for change, critically assessing the messages they receive from the media and finding ways to challenge unhelpful messaging around relationships.

## How do the lessons fit into the curriculum?

These lessons can be used to support learning about the following RSHE outcomes from the [DfE statutory framework](#):

Area of learning	Core area	Detail
Relationships and Sex Education	Families	Pupils should know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>that there are different types of commitment, stable relationships</li></ul>

	Respectful relationships, including friendships	<p>Pupils should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including: trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship.</li> </ul>
	Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	<p>Pupils should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex, and friendship.</li> <li>that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing</li> <li>that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others</li> </ul>
Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing	Internet safety and harms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how to be a discerning consumer of information online including understanding that information, including that from search engines, is ranked, selected and targeted.</li> </ul>

## A safe environment for learning

As with all PSHE/RSHE provision, these lessons should be delivered in a safe and supportive environment. Personal values can be a particularly sensitive topic and it is important that appropriate boundaries are put in place to protect the safety and wellbeing of all during activities and discussion.

- **Ground rules**

You may already have set ground rules with your class, these should be reinforced before beginning delivery of these lessons. If ground rules are not in place, spend time creating these with your students. Ask them to consider what will help them to feel safe, included and valued during the lessons. Of particular importance in these lessons will be respecting people's right to have a different view or opinion, giving the option to opt-out of discussions, and signposting to support. Include something

around how questions are to be asked and answered. For example, you may have the rule of 'no personal questions' and use a question box or post-its so every young person feels confident to contribute.

- **Values**

We all have values about relationships. Values are not factual, there are no rights or wrongs, they are based on our upbringing, life experiences, and beliefs. It is useful for the teacher to explore their own values before delivering these lessons; being aware of our own values enables us to put these to one side and focus on delivering in a balanced and non-judgmental way. The role of the teacher in these lessons is to facilitate discussions, ask pertinent questions, and share a range of perspectives. For some young people their values may be shaped by experiences of poor mental health, unhealthy or abusive relationships and role models; our aim is not to tell them their values are wrong but rather to explore how values impact on behaviour, identify possible consequences of these behaviours and share alternative viewpoints. It is also to explore how values can change through life.

- **Support and safety**

In both lessons, students should be reminded of where they can get support within, and outside of, school. There are some examples of support organisations on the slides – others can be added as appropriate. As touched on above, some young people may find it difficult to explore values and healthy relationships due to their previous or current experiences or situation. Give students the opportunity to raise concerns or speak to a member of staff prior to the lessons by alerting them of the content the week before. Allow students the opportunity to opt out of discussions, and don't pick on people to give answers. Observe body language and follow up with any students who display signs of discomfort, eg. Quieter than usual.

- **Safeguarding**

In the event of a disclosure of a safeguarding nature seek advice from your Designated Safeguarding Lead or contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

## Lesson Plans

### Lesson 1

<b>Summary</b>	This lesson explores values and how they impact on relationships. Students begin to explore what might influence someone's values and how values may change through life. They will also consider relationship aspirations and goals.
<b>Resources</b>	Lesson slides Question box or post-its for questions Quote hand-outs – one for each small group Magnet worksheet Relationship goals worksheet
<b>Lesson objective</b>	In this lesson we will explore our own and others' values around relationships, how these are formed and what may influence them.

<p><b>Learning outcomes</b></p> <p><b>Slide 2</b></p>	<p>At the end of the lesson, I will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe my own values around relationships and how these are similar and/or different to my peers</li> <li>• explain what influences our values around relationships and how these may change through life</li> <li>• identify my own relationship goals</li> </ul>
<p><b>Slide 3</b></p>	<p><b>Ground rules</b> Create or reinforce ground rules (see 'A safe environment for learning' earlier in this guidance).</p>
<p><b>Slide 4</b></p>	<p><b>Starter</b> Ask students to look at the words on the slide and choose one that feels important to them. Take some responses from the class.</p> <p>Explain that all these words represent human values.</p>
<p><b>Slide 5</b></p>	<p><b>What are values?</b> Students discuss with a partner the question 'What are values?'</p> <p>Take some responses from the class.</p>
<p><b>Slide 6</b></p>	<p>Show definition slide. Ask students if they can think of any other values than those on slide 4, eg. honesty, friendship, security.</p>
<p><b>Slide 7</b></p>	<p>Ask students in pairs to look at the questions on slide 7. How might these questions help someone to identify their values?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think of a time when you were happy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who were you with?</li> <li>○ What were you doing?</li> <li>○ What was happening?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Think of a time when you were feeling proud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What made you feel proud?</li> <li>○ Who shared in your pride?</li> <li>○ What was happening?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Give students the option of using the questions to identify a couple of their own values, either through discussion or internal reflection.</p> <p>Invite responses if students want to share.</p> <p>Ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Where do our values come from?</li> <li>○ How do these values influence our lives?</li> </ul> <p>Offer support to any students who find it difficult to identify values.</p>
<p><b>Slide 8</b></p>	<p>Show slide 8 - explain to students that someone's values often guide their wants, needs and behaviour in relationships.</p> <p>Discuss how our values might guide, or impact on, our behaviour.</p>

	<p>Ask students to think to themselves about how the values they identified have impacted on their behaviour in the past.</p> <p>Ask: How might the values shown on slide 8 impact on relationships? For example, if person A values honesty, what would they look for in a friend or partner? How could this value influence their behaviour in the relationship? What would their expectations for a relationship be?</p>
<b>Slide 9</b>	<p>Talk through the scenario on slide 9, explore how our values do not always entirely align, they may conflict, and we may prioritise one value over another in some situations.</p> <p>Ask students: Can you think of any other examples where someone's values might conflict?</p>
<b>Slide 10</b>	<p>Group-work – hand out the quotes and relationship values list – Ask students to look through the values list and identify any they need explaining.</p> <p>Ask students to discuss what they think are the values behind the quote? Circle any they think apply.</p> <p>Discuss group responses as a whole class.</p> <p>Ask students to consider which of these values are important for them.</p> <p>These quotes have been identified as they give scope to explore values. You may choose to insert other quotes from people who you feel your students relate to.</p> <p>There are no right or wrong answers in this activity – the aim is for young people to consider the values and how they might have impacted on this person's view on relationships and to give their justifications.</p> <p>Quotes:</p> <p><b>Michelle Obama</b> – American attorney and author, first African-American first lady of the United States</p> <p><b>Tyra Banks</b> – American television personality, model, businesswoman, producer, actress and writer.</p> <p><b>Julia Roberts</b> – American actress.</p> <p><b>Leo Tolstoy</b> – Russian writer, author of War and Peace.</p> <p><b>Bob Marley</b> – Jamaican singer, songwriter and musician.</p> <p><b>Joyce Meyer</b> – American Christian author and speaker.</p> <p><b>Henry Winkler</b> – American actor, comedian, producer, author and director.</p> <p><b>Portia De Rossi</b> – American actress, businesswoman and philanthropist.</p>

	<p>Stretch – for anyone that has finished quickly – ask them to write their own quote about relationships</p>
<p><b>Slide 11</b></p>	<p><b>Who or what influences our values around relationships?</b></p> <p>Students brainstorm all the things that might influence values around relationships. If any of the following influences haven't been mentioned, add them in: family, friends, social media, TV/film, learning/school, siblings.</p> <p>Students then plot the influences on the magnet worksheet as to how strong or not they feel the influence is. Remind them that they may not all agree, they may have to compromise.</p> <p>Discuss responses as a class. What are the similarities and differences between groups?</p> <p>Explore those that students have identified as exerting most influence – are they positive or negative influences?</p> <p>The plotting activity could also be done as a whole class if preferred. Write the influences on sheets of A4 paper – ask the students to imagine the magnet at one side of the classroom. Arrange the influences according to students' views, either stick on wall or get volunteers to hold them. Allow opportunity for discussion and alterations to the arrangement.</p> <p>Ask the students if they feel values around relationships change through life. How might a 40-year-old complete this activity, would it look different?</p>
<p><b>Slide 12</b></p>	<p>Ask - do our values change through life? Who or what has the biggest influence at each stage? Why?</p> <p>There are no right or wrong answers here, it is about opinion.</p> <p>You may find it useful here to reference <a href="#">Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development</a> here depending on the age and stage of students.</p> <p>Explain that unlike feelings which can change often, values are more stable through life. This can make values a useful guide in relationships.</p> <p>Pick out a few values, eg. trust, equality, responsibility – ask students if they feel these values are taught (learnt), caught (acquired, passed on) or both.</p>
<p><b>Slide 13</b></p>	<p><b>Relationship goals</b></p> <p>Explain that relationship goals are what /how someone wants to be in a relationship and what someone aspires to in a relationship</p>

<b>Slide 14 and 15</b>	<p>Ask students to return to their relationship quotes sheet – what could be the relationship goals of the person saying this? Fill in on the goal worksheet.</p> <p>Take responses from the class.</p>
<b>Slide 16</b>	<p>Encourage students to reflect on their values and consider what sort of relationship goals they have now and/or in the future.</p> <p>Pupils to discuss with a partner and then take responses as appropriate. Ask students if they feel their goals may change as they progress through life. What might influence them?</p> <p>Explain that not everyone will want to have a romantic or intimate relationship but in life most people will have some sort of relationship, whether that be with a friend, a family member, a carer, a work colleague.</p>
<b>Slide 17</b>	<p><b>Signposting</b></p> <p>Signpost students to support within school and outside. In the next lesson we will be building on our learning by looking in more depth at how the media influences relationships.</p>

## Lesson 2

<b>Summary</b>	<p>This lesson explores media messages around relationships and how these might influence young people. Students will consider representation of different kinds of relationships in the media and the impact of this. They will be encouraged to critically analyse media messages and identify ways to be agents for change.</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>Lesson slides Question box or post-its for questions Paper and pens for brainstorm Continuum sheet – enough for individuals (or continuum sheets for the wall) Representation in the media cards – cut up for each group 'I' or 'We' pledges – enough for each student or group</p>
<b>Lesson objective</b>  <b>Learning outcomes</b> <b>Slide 2</b>	<p>In this lesson we will explore the role of the media in shaping expectations around relationships, how to critically assess media messages and consider our role in challenging media narratives.</p> <p>At the end of the lesson, I will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe ways in which the media may influence expectations around relationships in both positive and negative ways.</li> <li>• share ideas on how the media can take a productive role in promoting healthy relationship expectations.</li> <li>• take action to minimise negative influences from the media and encourage responsible media representations of relationships.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Slide 3</b></p>	<p><b>Ground rules</b></p> <p>Create or reinforce ground rules (see 'A safe environment for learning' earlier in this guidance).</p>
<p><b>Slide 4</b></p>	<p><b>The Media and Relationships</b></p> <p>Ask: what do you understand by the term 'media'? – ensure understanding that 'media' in this context is used to describe all forms of mass communication, eg. internet, TV/film, advertising, news, social media</p> <p>Students to discuss the question on slide 4 with a partner and then take responses as a whole class.</p>
<p><b>Slide 5 and 6</b></p>	<p><b>Views on the media</b></p> <p>Show the question on slide 6 and ask students to guess the statistic from research around the media and relationships. Reveal the statistic. The statistic is taken from <a href="#">Reframing Relationships</a>. It is not necessary to share any other statistics from this report with students, however the content may inform your facilitation of this session.</p> <p>Ask: how does this fit with your earlier discussions? Do you agree/disagree? In what way might it do this? Encourage students to also reflect on discussions about values in the last lesson.</p>
<p><b>Slide 7</b></p>	<p>Run the continuum activity. Hand out the worksheets and direct students to complete. Ask each student to share their responses with a partner – how are their views similar or different to their partner? Why do they think this is?</p> <p>The continuum can also be done as a whole class. Stick the continuum poster sheets around the room. Ask students to make their mark using a pen on each one according to where they stand. Discuss the responses as a whole group. Explore how responses differ across the class and why this might be.</p> <p>Ensure young people know that this is about values and attitudes, not right or wrong – it is ok to have different views. Remind students of the group agreement if needed.</p>
<p><b>Slide 8</b></p>	<p><b>Representation in the media</b></p> <p>Split the class into small groups, give each a set of 'media representation cards' and ask them to sort into the categories of Often/Rarely/Never as relevant to what they experience from the media. Ask students to consider if there are any other people or aspects of relationships that they see often, rarely, or never represented in the media – they can add these in.</p> <p>Hold a class discussion to explore responses to the activity. What are the similarities and differences? Why is that?</p>

	<p>Explore the impact of the lack of or over-representation of some relationships/groups in the media. What influence could this have on young people's views and values around relationships?</p> <p>In the discussion, draw out whether students gave any consideration to whether the representation of these groups is positive or negative. You may choose to give some more time for pupils to consider this and feedback.</p> <p>You may want to give more specific examples for students to consider, for instance, the popularity of programmes featuring dating agencies for disabled people – what message does this send about disabled people and relationships?</p>
<p><b>Slide 9</b></p>	<p><b>Reframing relationships</b></p> <p>Briefly go through each point to check understanding. Explain that this graphic shows young people's views on how the media can better represent relationships for young people based on research from <a href="#">Reframing Relationships</a>.</p> <p>Ask students to discuss in groups and prioritise from 1 to 6 in order of which they feel are most important.</p> <p>Hold a class discussion to explore similarities and differences between the groups. Stress that our different opinions are what make us unique and that arguably all of these are important, but individual people may have different views.</p> <p>Ask: In relation to positive representations of relationships - what would you like to see more of in the media, what would you like to see less of?</p>
<p><b>Slide 10</b></p>	<p>Explain that the <a href="#">UN convention on the Rights of the Child</a> specifies how children should be treated. The two articles or rules on slide 10 relate to how young people are heard, and represented, by the media.</p> <p>Ask: Do you feel that the media listen to the views of young people? How well does the media provide accurate and reliable information for young people?</p>
<p><b>Slide 11, 12 and 13</b></p>	<p><b>Agents for change</b></p> <p>Ask: how can young people change the way the media represents relationships and/or minimise the influence of negative representations? Take responses.</p> <p>Share the statements on slide 12 – which of these would have most impact?</p> <p>Ask each student or groups of students to pledge one thing they will do to lessen negative influences from the media.</p>

	<p>Ask students to carry out their pledges as a project within class or as a homework task.</p> <p>There are a range of ways that you could encourage students to take action either during class or as a homework activity. Some examples are given below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Writing to a media outlet to either praise or ask for change.</li> <li>○ Taking a leadership role in a discussion about how to improve representation of relationships in school media</li> <li>○ Inviting a local journalist to talk with them about their role in tackling abusive relationships in their community</li> <li>○ Gather views from other students in school about representations of relationships in the media and present to local media outlets or nationally via social media.</li> </ul>
<b>Slide 14</b>	<p><b>Assessment opportunities</b></p> <p>Return to the opening brainstorm question 'How does the media influence young people's views about relationships?' – is there anything they would add to this? Ask students to write any additions in a different coloured pen.</p> <p>The Agents for Change pledges and actions can be used to evidence how young people have applied their learning from lessons 1 and 2.</p>
<b>Slide 15</b>	<p><b>Signposting</b></p> <p>Signpost students to support within school and outside.</p>

## Supporting documents

[Principles of Excellence in Relationships Education](#)

[Reframing Relationships – How the Media can Support Young People to Form and Sustain Healthy and Dependable Relationships](#)

[Commitment and Families videos and lesson resources](#)

## Contact

Fastn's relationships education work has now become part of charity, Family Links. To find out more and get in touch please visit the website <https://www.familylinks.org.uk/> or email [info@familylinks.org.uk](mailto:info@familylinks.org.uk)

## Notes:

1. Relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – the forgotten foundation of mental health and wellbeing, Mental Health Foundation. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/relationships-21st-century-forgotten-foundation-mental-health-and-wellbeing>
2. fastn Survation polling September 2020 and 2021
3. Reframing Relationships – how the media can support young people to form and sustain healthy and dependable relationships – fastn and Media Trust, 2022