



Educator Guide: **Gender-Based Violence Prevention** **within School-Based Comprehensive** **Sexual Health Education**



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Preface

The *Preventing Gender-Based Violence: Developing and Implementing Effective Sexual Health Education Policy and Practice* project is funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada's (WAGE) Feminist Response and Recovery Fund. The Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN) received funding to complete a series of project activities to help modify policies and practices related to gender-based violence (GBV) prevention within sexual health education programming across Canada.

The current resource, *Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* is part of this project and aims to support educators as they implement the GBV prevention sexual health education strategies outlined in the *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education*.

Graphic design by **Pam Sloan Designs**

French translation by
Jean Dussault and **Josée Dussault**

Acknowledgements

SIECCAN

Ada Madubueze, Project Coordinator,
SIECCAN, Calgary, Alberta

Sophia Greene, Projects Administrator,
SIECCAN, Vancouver, British Columbia

Jessica Wood, Research Specialist, SIECCAN,
Guelph, Ontario

Jocelyn Wentland, Project Manager/
Research Associate, SIECCAN, Kelowna,
British Columbia

Alexander McKay, Executive Director,
SIECCAN, Toronto, Ontario

CONSULTATION/REVIEW

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- **Salsabel Almanssori**, Adjunct Professor and SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario
- **Brandon Hamilton**, Teacher, GuysWork, Bridges Counselling Centre, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
- **Susan Hornby**, Senior Advisor, Joint Consortium for School Health (JCSH), Summerside, Prince Edward Island
- **Matthew Johnson**, Director of Education, MediaSmarts, Ottawa, Ontario
- **JJ (Jessica) Wright**, Assistant Professor, MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta

Introduction

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The *Educator Guide: Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education* helps educators implement the guidelines identified in the *Guidelines and Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention in School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education*.

The educator guide was developed based on research, expert consultations from reviewer group members, and in alignment with SIECCAN's core principles of sexual health education, trauma-informed education, anti-racist frameworks, intersectional and gender-transformative approaches. For detailed information on overall consultation and project development see the *Guidelines and Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education*.

WHY THIS GUIDE?

Education plays a vital role in addressing and preventing gender-based violence (GBV). Educators can positively influence students by promoting inclusive sexual health education and providing young people with the information and skills to make autonomous decisions about their sexual health and well-being. This guide facilitates age-appropriate discussions on relevant GBV prevention sexual health education topics such as gender stereotypes, establishing personal boundaries, fostering healthy relationships, and creating a safe environment for students.

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is intended for educational professionals who work with youth. The objective of this guide is to equip educators with the necessary knowledge, tools, and resources to effectively support students and implement GBV prevention sexual health education strategies.

HOW SHOULD THIS GUIDE BE USED?

This guide is meant to complement the [*Guidelines and Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention in School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education*](#).

It is not an exhaustive list of lessons or lesson plans, but rather a resource to help equip educators with the essential information and tools to enhance existing curriculum.

We recommend selecting the sections that are the most relevant to current curriculum/program needs.

Each class is unique, and teachers should tailor their approach to the unique needs of their students.

While the information in the guide is targeted towards helping educators, some of the information is also beneficial for students to read (e.g., information on boundaries and consent).

HOW IS THIS GUIDE STRUCTURED?

This guide provides a brief overview of GBV in Canada and its impacts. It offers several tips and strategies for educators to consider while teaching GBV prevention in comprehensive sexual health education (CSHE). The guide covers eight different concepts or topics related to GBV prevention:

Consent and Boundaries

Healthy Relationships and Communication Skills

Disrupting Gender Roles, Norms, and Stereotypes

Digital Media Literacy

Human Rights Education and Transformative Justice

Information on Reporting Abuse and Disclosures

Engaging Parents/Caregivers in Teaching GBV Prevention

Self-Support and Advocacy for Educators

Each GBV prevention topic chapter consists of three sections:

EXPLANATION

A brief explanation of the relevance of the GBV prevention topic, strategies and key considerations for teaching the topic.

ACTIVITIES

Activities such as reflection exercises for educators, action steps and guiding questions for classroom discussions about the GBV prevention topic are presented.

The guide is designed for educators to:

- individually reflect on GBV-related concepts before teaching
- use as a tool to help in their lesson plans and activities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

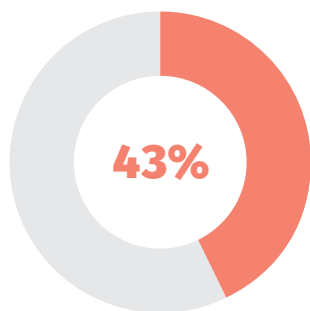
Each chapter includes a list of additional resources, including organizations, websites, and other documents to further support teaching GBV prevention topics.

Snapshot of Gender-Based Violence

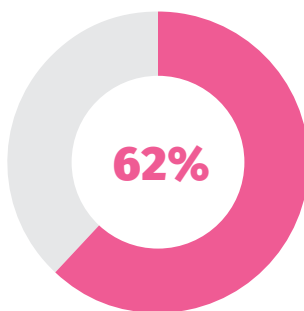
Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a widespread problem in Canada. **GBV is violence committed against someone based on their gender, gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender** (Women and Gender Equality Canada [WAGE], 2022). Forms of GBV include—but are not limited to – sexual violence, physical violence, intimate partner violence, psychological or emotional abuse, economic violence, technology-facilitated violence (such as cyberviolence or bullying; refer to the [Guidelines for Integrating GBV within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education](#), pg.11). Gender-based violence can also include harmful cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, early or forced marriage, among others.

KEY STATISTICS

- **Youth of all backgrounds and communities can experience violence**, regardless of identity or circumstance. However, women, girls, and gender-diverse people are at a higher risk of experiencing GBV (Cotter and Savage 2019; WAGE 2022).
- **1 in 10 Canadians** reported being sexually victimized before they turned 16 (Afifi et al. 2014).
- **Specific identities and social characteristics are not the problem**; interconnected systems of oppression (e.g., colonialism, racism, sexism, cissexism, and ableism) can impact a person's vulnerability to discrimination and oppression, placing them at greater or lesser risk for experiencing or perpetrating GBV.



43% of girls and young women aged 15 to 19 years have experienced some form of intimate partner violence (Savage, 2021).



In a national survey of 4000 youth in Canada, 62% of 2SLGBTQINA+ youth reported feeling unsafe at school (compared to 11% of cisgender, heterosexual students). (Peter et al., 2021)



1 in 4 youth aged 12 to 17 years have experienced cyberbullying (Hango, 2023).

IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE

GBV is a pervasive social issue that affects individuals of all ages, including youth.

It can lead to negative consequences for one's emotional, psychological, mental, and physical well-being.

For example, experiences of GBV are connected to poor academic performance, poor communication about sexual boundaries, low contraception use, unintended/unwanted pregnancies, and self-harm (Wathan 2012). Young people who face high-stress situations are more likely to exhibit mental health-related symptoms, such as anxiety and depression (Lalonde et al., 2020).

ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Educators can play a key role in preventing GBV by creating safe, equitable and inclusive learning spaces to create positive change in their schools and communities. The *Guidelines for Integrating GBV Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE)* offer guidance to effectively incorporate GBV prevention in comprehensive sexual health education. This involves emphasizing fundamental principles such as consent, healthy relationships, and communication, which have a significant impact on social norms and promote equity and safety for all.

Tips for Teaching Gender-Based Violence Prevention In CHSE

CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR WELCOMING AND CONSTRUCTIVE CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

Educators play a critical role in creating a positive and supportive learning environment that promotes respect, support, and safety for all students. When teaching about GBV prevention sexual health education topics, it is important to recognize that some students may have undergone traumatic experiences (e.g., sexual violence and abuse). Building a classroom culture around healthy socialization practices while adhering to school policies can cultivate a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe space for all students and educators. When discussing GBV prevention sexual health education topics, it is crucial to create a safe and supportive learning environment. Consider taking the following steps:

Educate oneself on GBV prevention in sexual health education topics to ensure that discussions are informed and productive (See the [Guidelines for Integrating GBV within School-Based CSHE](#), pg.78).

Establish clear ground rules to enable students to feel more comfortable and secure in sharing their thoughts and opinions.

- Have students participate in the development of rules and boundaries (e.g., respecting each other and respecting different values, using inclusive language, and keeping personal peer disclosures confidential)
- Ensure that students understand that it is okay to ask questions or to pass on questions. See the [GBV Teaching toolkit](#) worksheet for navigating how to create a classroom agreement and use inclusive language (Almanssori et al., 2023)

Acknowledge that students may have discomfort when discussing GBV and sexuality, especially those who have experienced sexual trauma, and provide strategies for managing emotions.

- Understand that students will have different reactions to GBV-related discussions. For example, say, "I can see that this topic is very important to you and it's understandable that it brings up strong emotions."
- Remind everyone that these discussions can be emotionally draining. Encourage students to practice self-care afterward, whether it's talking to a friend, engaging in a favorite hobby, or seeking professional support if needed.
- It is also important to inform students of/link students to available GBV-related support resources/services such as school counselors or clinics, community resources, etc.

Encourage respectful discussions. Use a one-voice-at-a-time rule and to keep the conversation (or any debates) orderly.

Provide a wellness time out for students who might want to take a break from GBV-related sexual health discussions. For example, dedicate a specific area of the classroom as the “Wellness Corner.” This area should be comfortable, quiet, and away from the main discussion space.

Prepare to support students on sensitive topics in advance. Use asset mapping, a collaborative activity to identify formal and informal supports available in the school, neighborhood, or community. These resources may include a school health nurse, a walk-in clinic, a helpline, as well as a list of school-based staff that students can turn to for support and guidance. This approach can empower students, foster community, and normalize seeking help. Brainstorm, discuss each support, and periodically update the asset map.

TIPS FOR USING GENDER, BODY, AND RELATIONSHIP-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Language matters. Gender-inclusive language is wording that carefully includes people of all genders and sexual orientations. It’s important that all people feel included, especially when discussing sexual health. Use gender-inclusive language and respect the language and terms that young people use to identify themselves. Here are some strategies for using inclusive language when teaching GBV prevention in sexual health education:

GENDER-FREE PRONOUNS: Use gender-neutral pronouns such as “they/their/them” when referring to individuals. For example, instead of asking, “What is he/she like?” you can ask, “What are they like?” or “What is that person like?”

GENDER LABELS: Aim to avoid the use of gendered body parts, processes, or relationships. For example, rather than saying “boys and girls,” educators can use terms like “students” or “individuals.” Instead of assuming gender relationships, refer to individuals as “partners” or “friends.”

GENDER AND SEX: When discussing gender or sex, use the term “sex assigned at birth” instead of “sex” or “biological sex.” For example, you can explain, “When your cousin Alexa was born, she had a penis, so her sex assigned at birth was male. Later, she identified as a girl, which is why we use ‘she’ and ‘her’ when referring to her.”

LANGUAGE RELATED TO BODIES: When teaching anatomy, acknowledge and respect diversity. For instance, you can refer to individuals as “people with a uterus,” “people with a penis,” and “people with a vulva,” and include discussions about intersex individuals. For example, “Every person’s body is distinct, so it’s possible for some individuals to have a reproductive system that differs from what you might expect.”

* See [*Egale’s Inclusive and Affirming Language Tips*](#) for more information

DELIVERING COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION TO ADDRESS GBV PREVENTION

Comprehensive sexual health education is essential to addressing GBV. This education should be inclusive and tailored to different age groups, aiming to equip individuals with the knowledge, and skills needed to make informed decisions, foster healthy relationships, and contribute to a culture of respect and consent. To achieve this, it is important to consider the following key points:

- Provide inclusive, accurate, age and developmentally-appropriate sexual health education that includes topics like reproduction, sexual decision-making (e.g., reasons to have or not have sex), contraception, safer sex strategies, puberty, bodily autonomy, body image, consent and boundaries, healthy relationships, gender identity and sexual orientation, communication and interpersonal skills, and sexual violence prevention, among others.
- Sexual health education should adhere to SIECCAN's *Core Principles of Sexual Health Education* (SIECCAN, 2019).
- Use SIECCAN's [*Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention in Sexual Health Education*](#) as a checklist for teaching age and grade-appropriate GBV prevention topics.
- Use existing provincial/territorial curriculum to identify where GBV prevention is incorporated (See Appendix A of the Educator Guide).

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION:

- ✓ Is accessible to all people inclusive of age, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, STI status, geographic location, socio-economic status, cultural or religious background, ability, or housing status.
- ✓ Promotes human rights including autonomous decision-making and respect for the rights of others.
- ✓ Is scientifically accurate and uses evidence-based teaching methods.
- ✓ Is broadly-based in scope and depth and addresses a range of topics relevant to sexual health and well-being.
- ✓ Is inclusive of the identities and lived experiences of 2SLGBTQINA+ people.
- ✓ Promotes gender equality and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.
- ✓ Incorporates a balanced approach to sexual health promotion that includes the positive aspects of sexuality and relationships, as well as the prevention of outcomes that can have a negative impact on sexual health and well-being.
- ✓ Is responsive to and incorporates emerging issues related to sexual health and well-being (such as the use of technology to access information and communicate with partners).
- ✓ Is provided by educators who have the knowledge and skills to deliver comprehensive sexual health education and who receive administrative support to undertake this work.

See [*The Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education \(2019\) and Questions and Answers: Sexual Health Education in Schools and Other Settings*](#) (SIECCAN, 2020).

APPLICATION OF USEFUL TEACHING APPROACHES IN THE CLASSROOM

Educators can create a safe and inclusive space for constructive discussions about GBV and sexual health by adopting the following four teaching approaches:

TRAUMA-INFORMED EDUCATION

Trauma-informed teaching strategies benefit both students and educators by creating a stable and nurturing environment, improving emotional regulation and focus, increasing self-worth and confidence, and helping students achieve their full potential (Fava & Bay-Cheung, 2013). Trauma-informed education principles include (SIECCAN, 2023a, pg .41):

- **Safety:** Ensure inclusive teachings and common areas are safe and welcoming when teaching GBV prevention sexual health education topics.
- **Trust and Transparency:** Build trust with students and ensure they know and understand the school policies regarding GBV disclosures and reporting.
- **Peer Support:** Foster safe student relationships through facilitated discussions, peer-led groups, and community-based support information.
- **Collaboration and Mutuality:** Actively engage students to determine what topics they would like to learn more about in sexual health education.
- **Empowerment, Voice and Choice:** Create an atmosphere where students feel validated and affirmed. Provide clear and appropriate messages about their rights and responsibilities.
- **Cultural, historical, and gender issues:** Recognize and address historical trauma, countering cultural and gender stereotypes related to sexuality.
- **Access To Knowledge, Services, and Resources:** Work to implement school board policies and prioritize GBV prevention in sexual health education into existing curriculum. Support students with access to relevant GBV prevention resources to enrich their learning experiences.
- **Post-Traumatic Healing and Growth:** Create space for growth for those who have experienced GBV by challenging stereotypes, promoting individual potential, and emphasizing positive aspects of sexual health and wellbeing for those who have experienced GBV.

NON-JUDGMENTAL APPROACHES

- Model and encourage non-judgmental approaches to discussing GBV prevention sexual health education topics, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual health choices, and social or cultural differences. For example, discuss narratives of individuals who have overcome challenges related to gender identity or sexual orientation. Encourage students to empathize with their experiences and provide them with examples of happiness and connection for individuals who identify with different genders and sexual orientations. Consistently use inclusive language and respect everyone's gender identity (see SIECCAN, 2023a, pg. 68).
- Model and encourage self-awareness using fact-based observations. When facilitating discussion, ensure non-judgmental and non-stigmatizing approaches. Avoid fear and shame-based messaging (e.g., utilize research findings and statistical data to address GBV and encourage students to express their thoughts while being respectful of diverse opinions and experiences).
- Appropriately respond to disclosures of GBV in a compassionate and non-judgmental manner.

CROSS-SUBJECT AND CO-CURRICULAR APPROACH

- Subjects like language arts, history, health, and art are examples of areas where educators can integrate GBV prevention topics into their curriculum.
- Initiate discussions on gender stereotypes and provide a diverse range of role models in curriculum materials (e.g., explore and challenge gender stereotypes by analyzing media portrayals and learning about diverse role models from various fields). By doing so, students can be empowered to challenge traditional gender norms and develop a greater understanding of the far-reaching impact of GBV (see SIECCAN, 2023a, pg. 32).

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

- Use participatory-style teaching techniques such as
 - Role playing (e.g., practice scenarios related to respectful communication, consent, and bystander intervention, etc.)
 - Case studies (e.g., critically analyze real-life or hypothetical case studies related to GBV)
 - Using a variety of age-appropriate teaching and learning materials in different formats (e.g., comic prints, videos, interactive games and puzzles, and other technology-based alternatives)
 - Incorporate embodiment activities that promote body awareness, mindfulness, and emotional expression to foster a deeper understanding of GBV issues (e.g., mediation, mindfulness, breathing exercises, dance)
- Regularly check in with students to understand their preferred learning methods. Ensure equal participation and prevent one person from dominating the conversation (see SIECCAN, 2023a, pg. 69)



Activity

REFLECTION EXERCISE

Educators may want to reflect on these questions before teaching GBV prevention in sexual health education:

- What are my personal views on inclusion, gender equity, diversity, and sexuality?
- What personal values or experiences influence the way I think about GBV and sexuality?
- How might my personal views on gender or sexuality impact my ability to work with young people and their families?
- Is the language I use respectful of all youth?
- Is my approach consistent with SIECCAN's Core Principles of Sexual Health Education?

ACTION STEPS

- In your own practice, look at ways to make changes to ensure that all students feel safe and respected (e.g., use inclusive gender language, and ensure non-judgmental conversations). For example, instead of assuming you know someone's experience, ask open-ended questions like "Can you share more about how you feel?" This allows the student to express their thoughts without feeling judged. Use moments we might have hurt someone's feelings as opportunities for the class to learn and create a stronger connection and lesson.
- Work with the students to establish clear classroom boundaries and ensure they understand the attributes of each boundary established. Display the co-created boundaries in a prominent location as a reminder of the expectations for the classroom. If classroom expectations have already been created, revisit them with the students to ensure everyone is on the same page.
- Brainstorm key phrases or conversation starters to address gendered stereotypes and/or homophobia/transphobia (e.g., discuss some common stereotypes and why they are not true).
- Encourage students to find ways to engage with their peers on the importance of gender inclusive language. See [*Egale's Inclusive and Affirming Language Tips*](#)
- Provide students with the opportunity to discuss situations where they were questioned about their choices because of traditional gender roles (if they feel comfortable doing so).
- Promote student-led initiatives and clubs that focus on gender equality and inclusivity, allowing students to actively participate in creating a safe environment.
- Encourage peer education programs where students can educate their peers about sexual health, gender equality, and respectful behavior.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- What does it mean to be truly inclusive and accepting? Discuss the importance of using gender-neutral/inclusive language and pronouns to create a safe environment for all.
- What can we do to create a safe space for everyone while considering various identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, etc)?
- How can we be allies to our 2SLGBTQINA+ friends and peers?
- What areas of your community are already creating collaborative and safe spaces? What do you admire about these spaces?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [*Toolkit for Safe and Caring Discussions About Sexual and Gender Minorities*](#)
- [*Good Practices of Cyber Sexual and Gender Based Violence Prevention in School Setting*](#)
- [*Complicated Conversation in the Classroom*](#)



Boundaries and Consent

The importance of learning about consent and its role in preventing GBV cannot be overstated. Effective education about consent should cover legal and ethical aspects, emphasizing respect, empathy, and care. This can empower students to promote a culture of respect and promote healthier relationships, with the goal of reducing GBV (See SIECCAN, 2023a, pg. 60). Educating young people about affirmative and proactive consent, rather than just the lack of a negative response, is crucial.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

Teaching youth about healthy boundaries is essential for improving decision-making skills, safety, and security. By understanding boundaries, young people can identify what makes them feel comfortable and respect other people's needs and emotions.

There are several important types of boundaries to teach youth about:

Physical boundaries: Understanding personal space and the importance of respecting others' bodies. Youth should learn that it is okay to say "no" to physical touch that makes them uncomfortable and that it's important to respect others' boundaries, as well.

Emotional boundaries: Involves learning about their own feelings and how to recognize and respect the emotions of others.

Sexual boundaries: Focuses on intimacy and sexual activity (e.g., protecting your right to consent to sexual activity, expressing your preferences for sexual activity, including where, when, and with whom).

Intellectual boundaries: Refers to expressing your own perspectives, values, and opinions while also respecting those of others.

Material boundaries: Involves respecting other people's property and asking for permission before using or borrowing things: learning that it is important to take care of your own belongings.

SIECCAN (2023a); SIECCAN (2023b); Earnshaw (2022)

There are several important types of boundaries to teach youth about:

Time boundaries: Involves managing your own time and being considerate of others' schedules and commitments. This means prioritizing your own activities while also respecting the time of others.

SIECCAN (2023a); SIECCAN (2023b); Earnshaw (2022)

Key considerations for promoting and teaching about consent and healthy boundaries in the classroom:

Discuss the concept of consent and boundaries with young people. Explain that it is acceptable to decline something that makes them uncomfortable; guide students in respecting the boundaries of others and handling their own emotions. This means teaching empathy, effective communication, and how to gracefully accept rejection without resorting to pressure or coercion.

Promote a culture of open and active communication; cultivate an inclusive and supportive atmosphere that encourages students to freely and respectfully express their emotions and needs. Ensure students understand that it is acceptable to decline or not participate in activities or behaviors that make them uncomfortable in interpersonal relationships.

Establish and adhere to clear expectations in your classroom. Calmly and respectfully inform students of what behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable. Consistently enforce these boundaries.

Teach young people how to assert their boundaries in a respectful manner. Encourage them to use “I” statements to express their needs and feelings and suggest strategies to help deal with hard feelings like disappointment, rejection, etc.

Model healthy boundaries in your relationships and interactions as an educator (e.g., by setting clear expectations for communication and personal space). This can help young people grasp the concept of boundaries and recognize that having them is both normal and acceptable.

Address the role of technology in relationships, including the importance of consent in digital interactions and the potential risks of online communication.

See the [*Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention in School-Based CSHE*](#) pg. 12–38 for age and grade-appropriate teaching approaches.

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent...

- is a voluntary agreement between people to engage in an activity. It involves seeking and granting permission to perform an action.
- is active—not passive (e.g., enthusiastically saying “yes”)
- **is an ongoing conversation**, not a one-time thing.
- **can be withdrawn at any time** (i.e., everyone has a right to change their mind about what they want to do with their body).
- must be given with a clear mind (e.g., the person is not drunk or stoned).

While consent is commonly associated with sexual encounters, it can also be applied in non-sexual scenarios such as sharing possessions, hugging, and exchanging stories or digital images.

CONSENT VIOLATIONS

A person should not be pressured to consent to something they do not want to do. Consent is critical in all settings and all relationships.

Consent Violations	Important Information About Consent to Sexual Activity
Pressuring/threatening/forcing someone into engaging in sexual activities they do not want	A person should engage in sexual interactions voluntarily, without pressure or force from another person. A person can agree to engage in sexual activity with someone, but while engaging in the sexual activity decide that they no longer want to continue with that activity. Their decision to not continue with the sexual activity must be respected.
Pressuring a person to comply to engage in sexual activities using threats to the relationship	Being in a romantic relationship with someone does not mean that the person will always want to engage in sexual activities with or be touched by their partner.
Assuming consent to sexual activity because of a prior/current relationship	Being in a romantic relationship does not equal consent. Consent is needed each time people engage in sexual activity.

Consent Violations	Important Information About Consent to Sexual Activity
Assuming sexual consent based on physiological response (e.g., having an erection, vaginal lubrication)	Physiological changes in the body (e.g., appearing to be aroused, having an erection or being lubricated) is not the same thing as sexual consent.
Using drugs or alcohol to pressure a person into sex they do not want (e.g., taking advantage of a person when they are drunk/high; intentionally getting a person drunk/high)	If someone is very intoxicated (under the influence of alcohol or other substances) or asleep, they are not able to provide informed consent.
Pressuring someone to send explicit images or sending a person's sexual image without their consent	Sharing of explicit images should occur only with the consent of both parties and no one should feel any pressure to do so. Privacy and trust are essential and everyone should feel safe and comfortable. It is also important to understand the laws focused on sharing explicit images (see SIECCAN, 2023a, pg. 12).
Non-consensual condom removal (often referred to as "stealthing")	Consent means everyone agrees to specific conditions, like using a condom. If condom use is agreed upon, removing it without consent is a violation. Both parties must communicate, agree, and respect boundaries. Any changes, like removing a condom, need mutual agreement.
SIECCAN, 2020; 2023a; 2023b	

TEACHING ABOUT CONSENT

There are several ways to teach about consent, such as role-playing, open discussions, and reflections. One widely used method for teaching consent is using the acronym **F.R.I.E.S** (Freely Given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic, Specific). It serves as a useful tool for understanding and practicing consent in real-life situations (Planned Parenthood, n.d.).



How to use **F.R.I.E.S** as key consent principles:

Freely given: Consent is a choice; it must be voluntary and not coerced. This means that one must not use pressure, intimidation, manipulation or the influence of drugs and alcohol to obtain consent. Educate youths on seeking clear and enthusiastic consent before engaging in sexual activity.

Reversible: Everyone has the right to withdraw their consent or change their mind about what they feel like doing at any point. Teach young people how to identify non-verbal cues; people use both verbal and nonverbal cues to indicate consent and to show when they do not like or do not want to engage in an activity. It is important to attend to both the verbal and nonverbal cues that your partner is giving. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Informed: In order to give consent, it is important for a person to fully understand what they are agreeing to. That means knowing all the risks, benefits, and possible consequences of the activity in question. Young people need accurate and comprehensive information about sexual health, setting and respecting personal boundaries, communication skills, and understanding how power dynamics, gender roles, and trauma can impact consent.

Enthusiastic: Consent should be expressed in an enthusiastic and positive manner, such as through verbal communication and non-verbal cues.

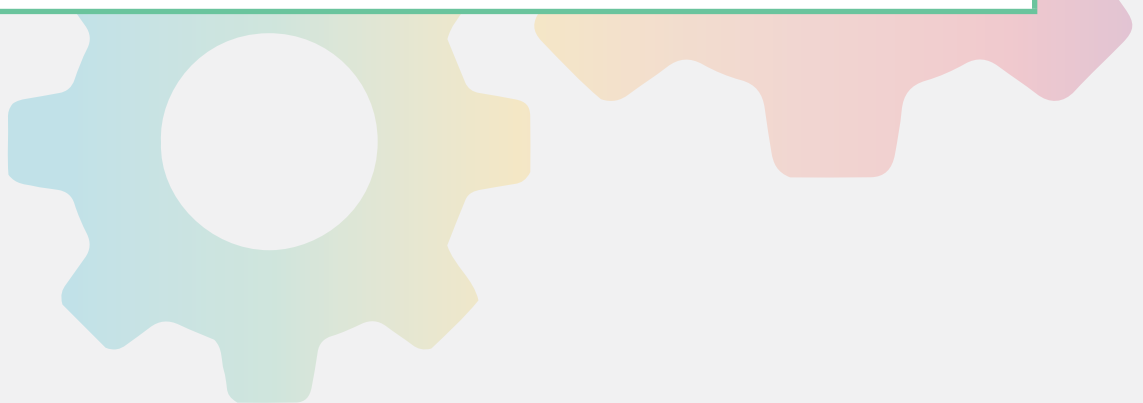
Specific: Consent must be clear and specific. Agreeing to one thing does not mean consenting to other things. For example, you can consent to one type of sexual activity (e.g., touching with hands) but you can also not consent to other types of sexual activity (e.g., oral sex, penetrative sex). Educate young people on how to communicate their boundaries clearly and respectfully and how to listen to and respect the boundaries of others.

Educators can identify non-consensual behaviors and address these by teaching the importance of establishing consent and respecting other people's bodily autonomy.

REFLECTION EXERCISE

- Take a moment to reflect on your own biases and assumptions regarding consent and boundaries. How might these beliefs impact your teaching?
- Have you created a safe classroom environment that supports students to give and receive consent effectively?
- Consider the different ways that someone can ask for consent and how students can communicate their boundaries.
- How can you encourage students to express their needs and desires while respecting the boundaries of others?
- Reflect on the diversity of your student population. How can you ensure that discussions on consent are inclusive and relevant to all students, considering different backgrounds and experiences?

ACTION STEPS

- Consider the power dynamic within the classroom and how consent dynamics may be impacted when educators hold more authority and power. Model that you understand this power imbalance through prioritizing collaboration in lessons with students and listening to their voices.
 - Break down the power dynamics that students may encounter in their lives. For instance, consent cannot be coerced by those who hold power over them.
 - Link consent concepts to other subjects. For instance, in social studies or history, consider what we can learn about consent from the Indigenous Sovereignty movement? (e.g., consent is free, prior, and informed) .
 - Use interactive teaching methods such as role-playing scenarios, case studies, or group discussions to actively engage students in exploring and understanding consent and boundaries.
- 

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- How does effective communication contribute to giving and obtaining consent? What are some verbal and non-verbal cues that indicate if someone has given or withdrawn consent?
- Can you provide examples of healthy boundaries that individuals might want to establish? How can we work to recognize and respect other people's boundaries? What can we do when someone's boundaries are different from our own?
- Define your own personal boundaries and explain how to establish them. How do you recognize when your boundaries have been crossed or compromised?
- How can you tell if your partner or friend is uncomfortable with a situation or if their boundaries are being crossed? Why is it important to pay attention to non-verbal cues?
- Can you share examples of how cultural backgrounds may affect perceptions of consent and boundaries? Why is it important to consider diverse perspectives when discussing these topics?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [*Safeguarding Your Child*](#)
- [*Consent: It is Easy as Tea*](#)
- [*Boundaries and Consent*](#)
- [*Every Body Curious Videos, younger grades*](#)
- [*Consent and Communication. Amaze Video*](#)
- [*The Truth About Unwanted Arousal. Emily Nagoski*](#)
- [*How Do You Know if Someone Wants to Have Sex with You? Planned Parenthood Video*](#)

Healthy Relationships and Communication Skills

Healthy relationships are built on trust, honesty, communication, respect of boundaries, and a shared commitment to growth. Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with friends, family, and partners are important for physical and mental well-being, problem-solving, and social skills. Teaching young people about healthy relationships is crucial for making informed decisions and building positive connections.

In healthy relationships, partners maintain:

- a balanced power dynamic
- a respect for boundaries
- equitable participation in decisions and self-expression

Unhealthy relationships, marked by power imbalances and emotional manipulation, can lead to abuse—including:

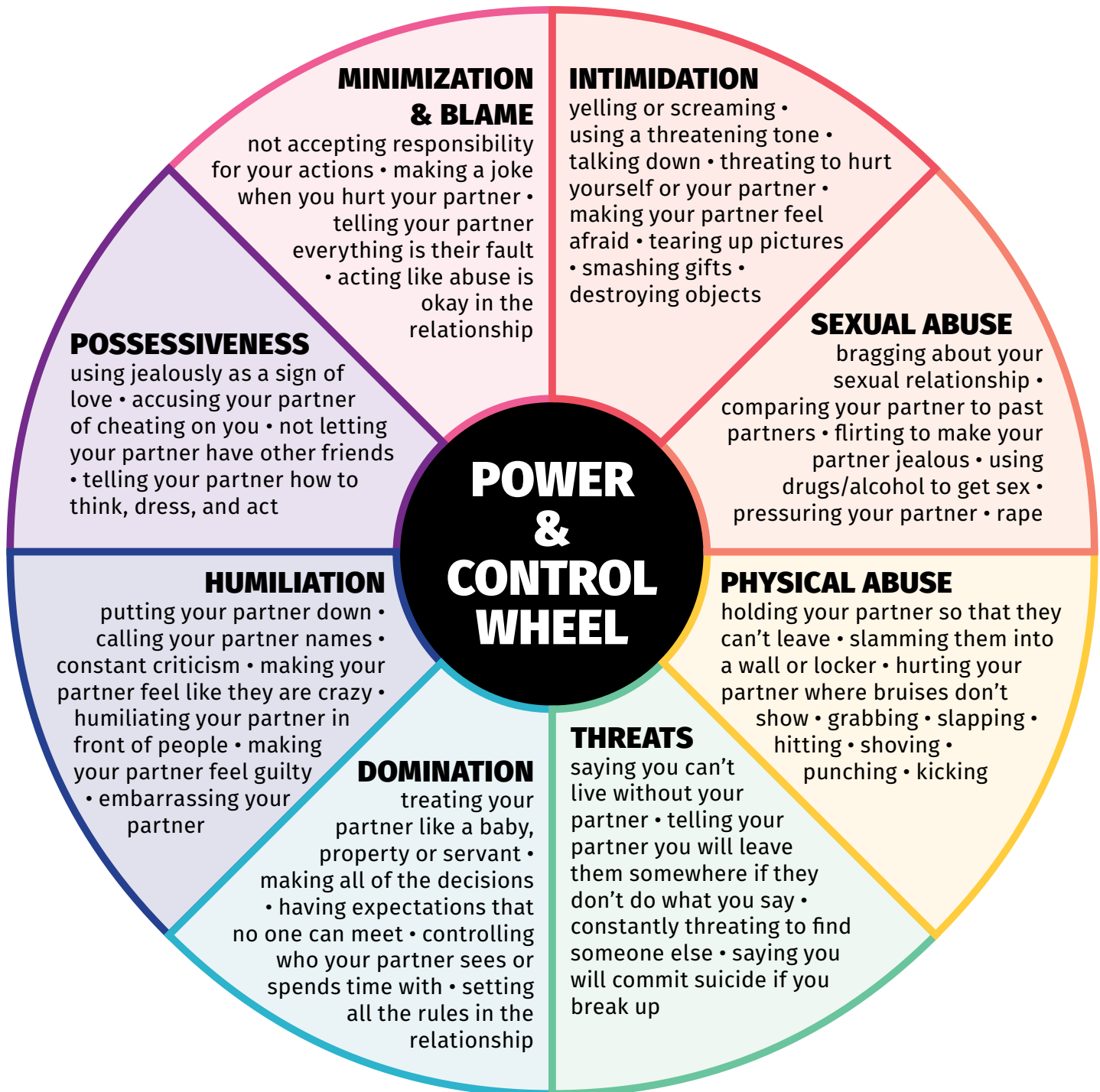
- dating abuse
- a harmful pattern of control over a dating/romantic partner

Recognizing and challenging unhealthy dynamics are vital for fostering positive relationships based on equality and respect.

The **Power & Control Wheel**, when compared to the **Equality Wheel**, helps individuals identify negative traits, encouraging self-reflection, and the development of skills necessary for nurturing and maintaining healthy relationships built on mutual respect and dignity, free from abuse or inequality (Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition, 1995; Pence & Paymer, 1993).

SIGNS TO CONSIDER IN UNHEALTHY AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

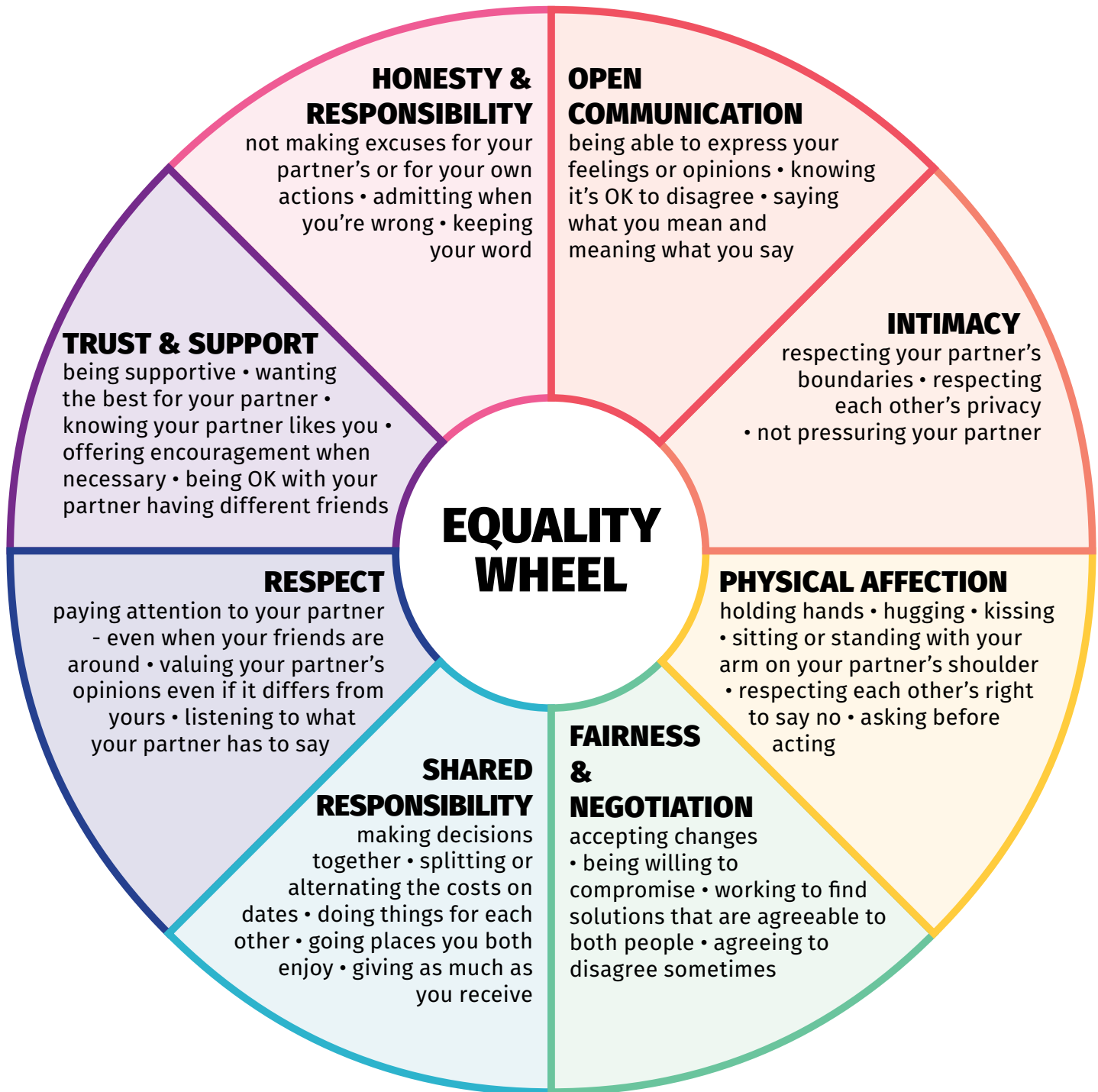
UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Source: [Reaching & Teaching Teens](#) - Nebraska Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Coalition 1995.

Adapted from the original Power and Control Wheel by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, www.theduluthmodel.org

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Source: [Reaching & Teaching Teens](#) - Nebraska Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Coalition 1995.

Adapted from the original Equality Wheel by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, www.theduluthmodel.org

*** Educators can adapt both the power and control, and the equality wheels to the ages and needs of students in their classroom.**

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: A CORNERSTONE OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Good communication is key to a healthy relationship. It builds trust, helps resolve conflicts, and fosters intimacy. However, it is important to note that communication styles may differ based on one's cultural background and personal preferences. It is therefore essential to express our values, opinions, feelings, and aspirations in a clear and concise manner in our interpersonal relationships.

Communication styles:

Passive Communication: Includes hesitating to express opinions or needs in a conversation. This can be due to fear of conflict or avoiding trouble by suppressing your feelings. If you find yourself saying "I don't care" or "It doesn't matter to me" when you actually do care, you might be using a passive communication style.

Passive Aggressive Communication: When communicating with this style, individuals use indirect methods like sarcasm and silence to express their feelings instead of directly stating what is on their mind and/or that their feelings are hurt.

Aggressive Communication: Expressing thoughts and beliefs in a disrespectful manner with the intention of gaining control and dominating conversations.

Assertive Communication: The ideal communication style is assertive. It is about communicating one's thoughts and feelings in an honest and respectful way while also valuing the opinions and emotions of others. It entails being confident in standing up for oneself while also being open to discussion and hearing the experiences of others.

See [Communication and Conflict Resolution](#) by Kids Health Hub

TIPS FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION

SAFE SKILLS

The SAFE skills developed by the Safe Dates program by Hazelden Foundation (Foshee & Langwick, 2004) empower students to navigate relationships more effectively, resolve conflicts, and develop strong communication skills. By practicing these skills, students can create a more respectful and harmonious social environment, both inside and outside of the classroom.

S – STAY CALM

- Use calming techniques to remain composed (e.g., breathing).
- Choose an appropriate time to talk to the person if you have a concern.
- Let the person know you are attentive (e.g., focusing your attention on the conversation).
- Practice active listening. Instead of focusing on how to respond and make your point, listen and attempt to comprehend the other person's viewpoint.

A – ASK QUESTIONS

- Ask honest and open questions to better understand the situation.
- Aim for understanding rather than agreement and show respect for opinions without passing judgment.
- By listening to your partner's answers, you may come to realize that the conflict was a simple misunderstanding.

F – FIND OUT FEELINGS

- Find out how the other person feels about the situation that is causing the disagreement.
- Express your own feelings; be honest and specific, referring to the situation and what about it upsets you.
- Express your own feelings honestly and specifically using "I statements" so that you do not come across as accusatory.
- Respect the other person's thoughts and emotions and apologize if you make a mistake.
- Validate their emotions by saying, "I can see that it really hurt your feelings." Silence can be an effective way to listen.

E – EXCHANGE IDEAS FOR A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

- Suggest possible solutions.
- Discuss and determine the solutions that work best for both parties. Find a solution that allows everyone to feel heard, move forward, and feel satisfied with the outcome.

Effective communication and conflict resolution work best when both parties are acting in good faith. However, in cases of gaslighting, a form of emotional abuse that involves manipulation and distortion of reality, these communication techniques may not be effective. Youth should be taught how to recognize the signs of manipulation, seek support when necessary, and prioritize their well-being.

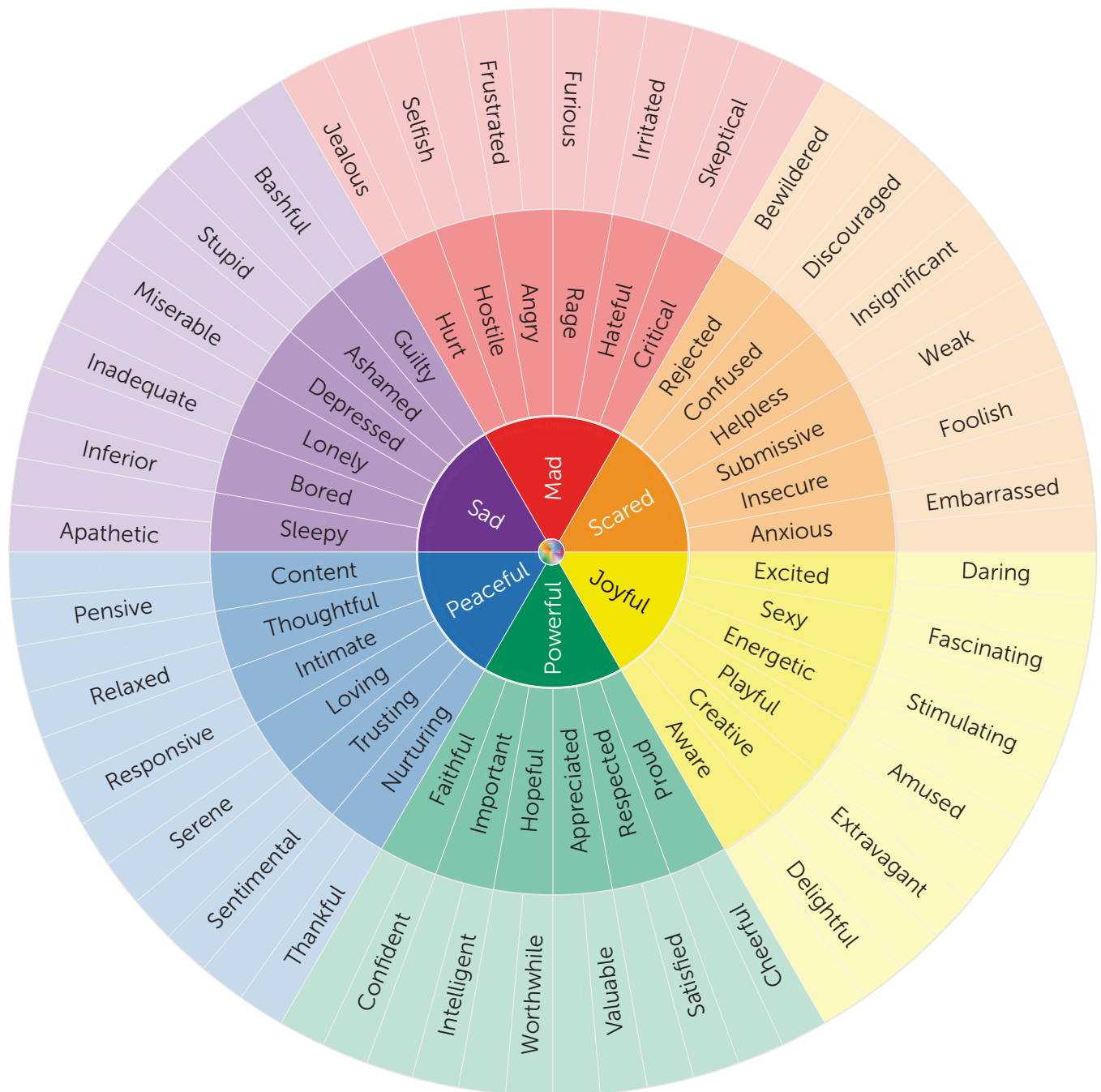
Gaslighting is a form of coercive control used to manipulate and gain power over a person. In intimate relationships, a person may use gaslighting to make a partner doubt themselves by:

- trivializing or dismissing their partner's feelings
- attempting to distort their partner's reality (e.g., lying about an issue despite proof, saying they did something when they did not)
- refusing to take responsibility for one's actions (e.g., pretending to forget what happened, blaming their partner for their own actions)

(VAWlearningnetwork, n.d)

THE FEELING OR EMOTION WHEEL

The Feeling Wheel is a valuable tool for helping students explore and articulate their emotions. This tool can help them develop emotional intelligence skills, enhance self-awareness, and create a more empathetic and emotionally supportive learning environment (Willcox, 1982).



The Feeling Wheel by Gloria Wilcox
Source: [What am I Feeling?](#)

To effectively use the Feeling Wheel with students, educators can follow these steps:

- 1. Introduce the Feeling Wheel:** Start by introducing the Feeling Wheel to students and explain how it categorizes emotions into primary and more specific feelings.
- 2. Use an inner-to-outer approach for younger children:** Begin from the inner circle and work outwards to identify their basic emotion and, then, gradually work outward to pinpoint more specific emotions.
- 3. Discuss complex emotions with older children:** With older students, engage in discussions about more complex emotions such as annoyance, embarrassment, or jealousy.
- 4. Establish routine:** Incorporate the Feeling Wheel into regular routines, either daily or weekly, to help students become more comfortable using it as a resource when they are unsure about their emotions.
- 5. Lead by example:** Set an example by using the Feeling Wheel yourself. This encourages students to embrace its utility and encourages them to use it confidently.
- 6. Acknowledge difficulties:** Emphasize that it is normal for emotions to be complex and sometimes not fit into one word or category. Let students know it is okay to have trouble pinpointing a single emotion.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM:

- Teach the concept of consent in relationships, emphasizing that it must be informed, enthusiastic, and ongoing.
- Discuss the importance of setting and respecting personal boundaries in friendships, family relationships, and romantic partnerships.
- Address the role of technology in relationships, including the importance of consent in digital interactions and the potential risks of online communication.
- Model good communication practices. For instance, demonstrating how to participate in a class discussion or answering questions can be helpful.
- Arrange practice conversations to assist students in refining their communication abilities.
- Encourage students to share their thoughts on what makes a healthy relationship and how to resolve conflicts. Provide strategies for resolving conflicts in a non-violent and constructive manner.
- Emphasize the importance of de-escalation and seeking help when needed.
- Integrate emotional intelligence education, teaching students to identify, understand, and manage their emotions and empathize with others.
- Encourage journaling, which allows students to reflect and express themselves in writing.
- Incorporate diverse cultural perspectives and relationship dynamics to promote understanding and acceptance.
- Familiarize students with local resources, such as counseling services, shelters, or crisis hotlines, that can provide support to individuals experiencing GBV or in need of sexual health information.

See the [*Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention in School-Based CSHE*](#) pg. 12–38 for age and grade-appropriate teaching approaches.



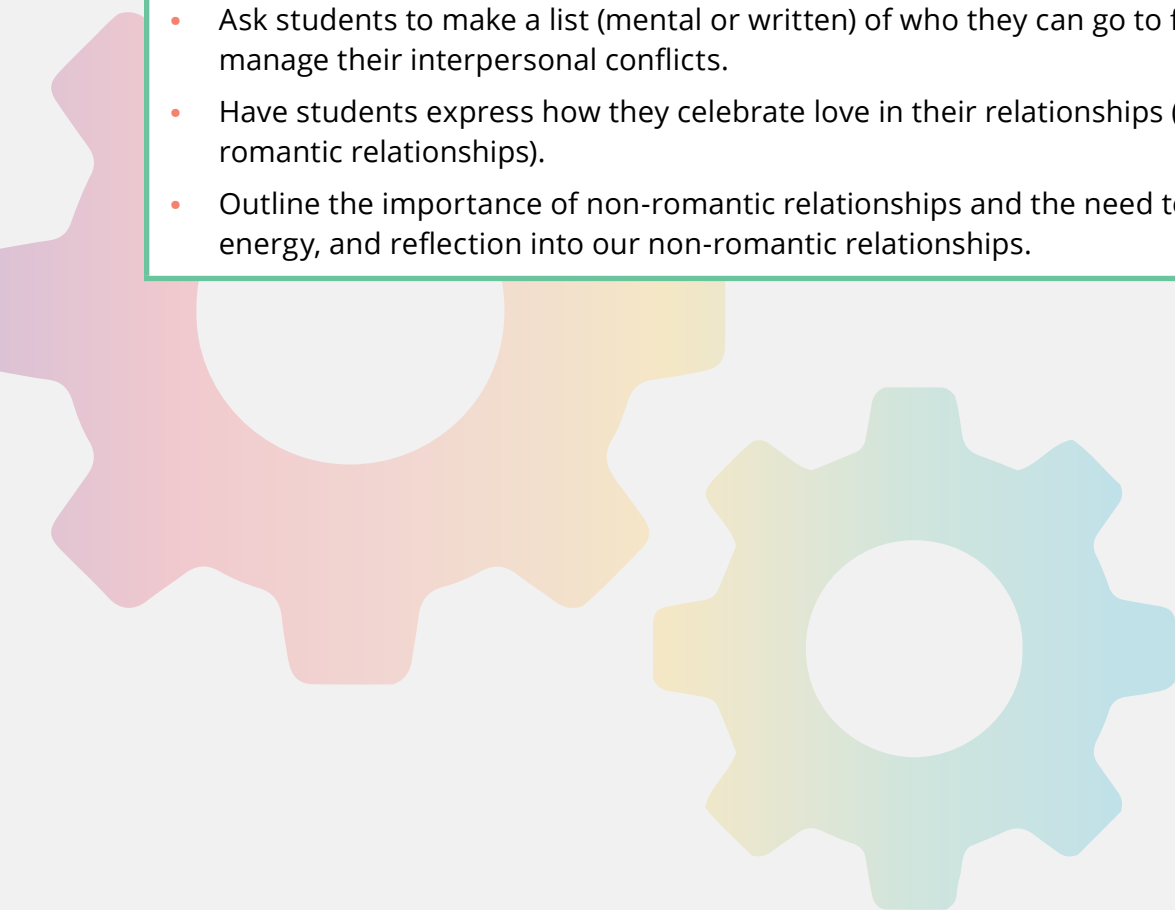
Activity

REFLECTION EXERCISE

- What makes a healthy relationship?
- How can we distinguish between temporary hurt feelings and patterns of unhealthy communication/treatment?
- How do we decide when to try to repair a relationship after conflict or move on from and end a relationship?

ACTION STEPS

- Use the wheel as a classroom tool to help solve disputes. Begin conflict resolution with the statement “I feel...”
- Introduce the Feeling Wheel as a tool for students to express their emotions.
- Use the pictures to talk about, identify, and describe different emotions when you or your students are discussing feelings.
- Ask students to make a list (mental or written) of who they can go to for advice on how to manage their interpersonal conflicts.
- Have students express how they celebrate love in their relationships (friends, family, romantic relationships).
- Outline the importance of non-romantic relationships and the need to invest time, energy, and reflection into our non-romantic relationships.



GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- How healthy is/are my relationship(s)? Explore positive and negative qualities of personal relationships (past or current) with friends, family, or any person in your life.
- Identify healthy and unhealthy characteristics of intimate relationships.
- How can we identify some of the tactics that abusers use to gain power and control over their partners using the Power and Control Wheel?
- Why is equality/equity important in a relationship? How can individuals ensure that power and decision-making are shared fairly in a relationship?
- What are healthy and unhealthy ways to communicate during a disagreement?
- Discuss the difference between different styles of communication and their potential outcomes.
- What does respect look like in a relationship? How can individuals maintain respect even when facing disagreements or conflicts?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [*Healthy Relationship Educators Toolkit*](#)
- [*Healthy Relationships Resource Toolkit*](#)
- [*Safe Dates Hazelden Foundation*](#)
- [*Consent. Prevent*](#)
- Almanssori, S., Trent-Rennick, K., Lai, A., & Vanner, C. (2023). *Teaching about gender-based violence toolkit*. Gender-Based Violence Teaching Network, University of Windsor

Disrupting Gender Roles, Norms, and Stereotypes

From the moment we are born, we are exposed to messages that perpetuate gender stereotypes. Children typically begin to grasp their gender identity, a pivotal aspect of their self-awareness, as early as two years old (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2023). However, as children grow, they absorb societal expectations regarding personality traits, behaviors, and attitudes associated with gender roles. These expectations can be influenced by family, friends, school, and media and have a profound impact on a child's life. The pressure to conform to these expectations can shape a child's personality, appearance, social interactions, and interests, and may limit their opportunities in life.

To create a fair and inclusive learning environment, educators must actively challenge gender stereotypes and restrictive gender norms. This not only reduces discrimination and bullying but cultivates critical thinking and self-expression in students (SIECCAN, 2023a).



COMMON GBV MYTHS

Myths	Facts
GBV is committed only by strangers and “monsters”	Perpetrators of GBV can be acquaintances, partners, or family members. Most incidents occur within known relationships. It is essential to teach about consent, healthy relationships, and recognizing abusive behavior regardless of the relationship type. About 80% of rapes and sexual assaults are committed by a partner, friend, or acquaintance of the victim/survivor (Conroy & Cotter, 2017).
If a person does not fight back during sexual violence, they must have consented	Victims/survivors of sexual violence may respond in various ways, including freezing due to fear. Lack of resistance does not imply consent. Understanding the psychological impact of trauma is vital to dispelling this myth.
Most people are lying about their experience of sexual assault or provide false reports	False reporting rates for sexual assault are low, typically between 2-8%, which is similar to rates for other crimes (Lonsway et al., 2009). Most survivors do not report their experiences due to fear, stigma, or lack of trust in the justice system. Believing survivors and providing support is essential.
Boys/men cannot be victims/survivors of GBV	GBV affects individuals of all genders. Boys/young men also experience violence, especially boys/men who disrupt traditional gender and sexual norms (e.g., transgender boys/men, gay and bisexual boys/men). It is critical that all boys/young men have access to GBV information and support services.
GBV does not occur in same-gender relationships	GBV occurs in all types of relationships, including same-gender relationships. People in same-gender relationships experience domestic abuse, sexual violence, and other forms of GBV. 2SLGBTQINA+ people can also experience additional forms of GBV (e.g., “corrective” sexual violence, controlling someone’s gender transition; Gamarel et al, 2022; Wisdom2Action, 2022).
Domestic violence usually only happens in married, common-law adult couples	Domestic violence can occur in various relationships, including dating relationships, between parents and children, and among siblings. It is not limited to marital or cohabiting relationships and can affect individuals of all ages.

ENGAGING BOYS AND YOUNG MEN ON HEALTHY MASCULINITY

Boys and young men deserve the freedom to explore a diverse range of emotions, needs, and interests, free from the constraints of traditional gender norms. Despite the evolving definitions of masculinity, those who do not conform to traditional gender norms often face punishment and ridicule. By critically evaluating, deconstructing, and rejecting harmful gender norms, we can aim to reduce sexism and promote positive attitudes and behaviours (e.g., denouncing violence, valuing individuals).

Framework for examining masculinities:

Restrictive masculinity	Healthy Masculinity
Always be decisive and avoid seeking help	Asking for help when needed
Never show fear or weakness. Be tough, expecting other men and boys to be tough(er)	Showing vulnerability and feeling comfortable in emotionally nurturing roles (e.g., caring for and supporting others)
Conceal emotions and restrict expressing feelings	Embrace expressing a full range of emotions (sadness, fear, shame, kindness, tenderness) and validate the feelings of others
Aggression equals dominance	Never use control or violence. Develop healthy relationship skills (active listening, communication, nonjudgmental support, understanding consent)
Pressuring other young men and boys to behave in stereotypically masculine ways	Serve as role model for other young men and boys by calling out/in those who engage in behaviors that are disrespectful or aggressive
Devalue girls, women, and persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities	Treat people equally and respectfully regardless of gender or sexual orientation
Men are positioned as taking an assertive role, having a high sex drive, gaining status from sexual encounters, and being willing to engage in any partnered activity with a woman	Masculinity is diverse. Young men and boys can be assertive or nurturing and have varying sexual desire. Respect, understanding, and acceptance are key in fostering healthy relationships and challenging and changing harmful stereotypes
See SIECCAN (2023a)	

Key considerations for teaching gender equality and healthy masculinity:

Acknowledge and discuss intersectionality, considering how factors such as race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and disability intersect with gender, influencing experiences and perspectives. This helps in understanding the diverse challenges faced by individuals.

Encourage students to critically analyze and challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes through discussions, debates, and media analysis. Highlight diverse role models who defy traditional gender norms, showcasing positive examples of masculinity and femininity.

When engaging with young men and boys, it is important to use an asset-based approach. This means asking questions that encourage them to reflect on the positive aspects of their identity and experiences, such as “What do you enjoy about being a boy or young man?” and “What is your role in supporting girls and young women?”

Discuss restrictive/traditional forms of masculinity and their harmful effects. Teach students to recognize and reject restrictive and harmful behaviors and attitudes such as dominance, aggression, and the suppression of emotions.

Storytelling and narratives can be powerful tools for building rapport and encouraging self-reflection.

Emphasize the importance of understanding and expressing emotions. Encourage boys and young men to recognize a wide range of emotions and validate their feelings without resorting to anger or aggression.

It is important to practice and develop strong conflict resolution skills. This includes cultivating self-awareness, empathy, and compassion, as well as practicing effective communication techniques. Model these skills during interactions with young men and boys; this can help them learn how to navigate conflict in healthy and productive ways.

Ensure that discussions are sensitive to the unique experiences and challenges faced by marginalized young men and boys.

See the [*Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention in School-Based CSHE*](#) pg. 12–38 for age and grade-appropriate teaching approaches.

STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH COUNTER-RESISTANCE WHEN TEACHING GBV PREVENTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Educators may encounter resistance when teaching GBV prevention and gender equality education in classroom. Here are some strategies to consider when you encounter resistance:

Wellness check: It is important for educators to reflect on their own positions, concerns, and fears when engaging with students. They should assess their confidence in delivering work that is effective and professional, even in the face of resistance or aggression.

Discuss expectations: Discussing common reactions and feelings can help students better understand their responses, anticipate resistance, and encourage self-reflection.

Active listening: This is a crucial skill that should be honed when responding to students' concerns and objections. It is essential to validate their feelings and acknowledge their perspective to show respect for their opinions.

Open dialogue: Encouraging open and respectful dialogue creates a safe environment for students to express their opinions without fear of judgment. Facilitating discussions that acknowledge and explore different perspectives is important.

Nudge approach: Communicating GBV prevention topics effectively can be achieved using the nudge principles. Educators can tailor their approach and messaging to the level of their students. Given diverse knowledge levels, it is essential to clarify terms and concepts to establish a shared understanding among all students. See the [Nudge Approach](#) by Shift.

Redirecting to active questions and staying on topic: If a student attempts to debate a settled question or engages in bad faith arguments, the teacher can assert that the specific issue is not open for discussion, maintaining a respectful and focused classroom environment. See [Complicated Conversations in the Classroom](#) by MediaSmarts.

Research and facts: Providing factual information and statistics about GBV, sexual health, and debunking myths and misconceptions can help to dispel resistance rooted in misinformation.

Empathy and understanding: It is important to understand the root cause and empathize with the viewpoint, even if you disagree. Expressing understanding of young people's concerns can help them feel heard.

Storytelling: Sharing real-life stories or case studies that highlight the impact of GBV can promote empathy and help students connect emotionally with the issue.

Flood et al., (2021); Glinski et al., (2018); Minerson et al., (2011)

Critical thinking: Encouraging critical thinking by asking thought-provoking questions can challenge students to critically analyze societal norms and cultural attitudes that perpetuate GBV.

Peer group discussion: Allowing students to discuss GBV-related topics in small groups can be effective in changing GBV-related attitudes.

Consistency: Changing attitudes takes time; revisiting GBV prevention topics in different ways and utilizing various teaching methods can help reduce resistance.

Resources and support: Offer additional resources, reading materials, or counseling services for students can address concerns stemming from fear or ignorance. It is crucial to recognize that students may have varying levels of understanding of the topic. Clarify terms and concepts to ensure everyone has a common understanding.

Flood et al., (2021); Glinski et al., (2018); Minerson et al., (2011)

Understanding the distinction between espoused values (what people claim to value) and actual values (guiding day-to-day behavior) may be helpful when integrating GBV prevention in sexual health education. Educators can engage students in a range of strategies that encourage self-reflection, interactive discussions, and critical analysis of societal influences to bridge the gap between stated values and real actions (Argyris, 2002). By promoting empathy, inclusivity, and encouraging students to align their behaviors with their expressed values, educators can foster a culture of respect. Addressing resistance is a process, not an event. It requires patience, understanding, and a commitment to creating an inclusive and respectful learning environment.



Activity

REFLECTION EXERCISE

- What does healthy masculinity look like in the classroom?
- Reflect on who benefits from ideas of restrictive/traditional masculinity, or ideas of “one-size-fits-all” ideas of masculinity and/or femininity.
- Who benefits from patriarchy?
- Reflect on your own biases and beliefs about gender, and how you can foster an environment of continuous learning and improvement.
- How does the entire community benefit when people of all genders are not confined to imposed roles/expectations?

ACTION STEPS

- Introduce students to diverse role models from various fields, including science, arts, sports, and activism. Highlight figures who have challenged gender norms.
- Discuss how gender norms intersect with other aspects of identity such as race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. Help students recognize the complexities of identity and how multiple factors influence one’s experiences with gender roles.
- Engage students in discussions about activities, hobbies, music, talents, and interests that are often associated with a specific gender. What are some examples of gender-conforming behavior and what falls outside these roles? Encourage them to reflect on their own experiences and challenge these gender norms. Discuss with them how committing to all gender norms is impractical and does not enable personal choice.
- Regularly integrate discussions of gender norms and stereotypes into the curriculum, exploring gender-related themes through literature, history, and other subjects to reinforce the importance of challenging restrictive norms.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- Reflect on controversial statements about gender roles – what are some common gender stereotypes/norms that we see in our culture (e.g., in media, school or communities)? How might these stereotypes/norms impact the way we think about ourselves and others?
- Why is it important to challenge societal expectations of masculinity and femininity?
- How can we challenge the idea that certain jobs, activities, or relationship roles are only for specific genders?
- Show students advertisements, movie clips, or book excerpts that portray gender stereotypes. Discuss these examples, asking questions like, “What messages are these portrayals sending about gender roles?” Encourage students to analyze and deconstruct these stereotypes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Gilham, C., Green, M., Neville-MacLean, S., Bakody, N., Ternoway, H., Smith, D., & Augusta-Scott, T. (2023). [*GuysWork: Describing a school-based healthy relationships program for adolescent boys and results from a pilot evaluation during COVID-19*](#). *Psychology in the Schools*, 60(9), 3372-3388.
- Dozois, E., & Wells, L. (2020). [*Changing contexts: A framework for engaging male-oriented settings in gender equality and violence prevention – Practitioners' guide*](#). Calgary, AB: The University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence.
- [*Next Gen Men 10 Ways Educators Can Build Positive Masculinity with Boys*](#)



Digital Media Literacy

Digital devices expose youth to media that can impact their sense of identity (Schimmele et al. 2021). To practice good digital citizenship, youth should learn to consider the sources, motives, and interpretations behind the stories they consume and understand that how we share information can shape our perception of the world and ourselves.

USING DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

The Internet and technology can offer children, parents, and educators valuable learning opportunities, but also raise concerns about safety. Perpetrators can exploit technology to commit violence and abuse. This can take many forms, including online harassment, sharing cruel or humiliating content about someone, impersonation, hate speech, doxing, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, image-based abuse, gendered disinformation, blackmail, exploitation, violent threats, and child abuse material. It is critical to equip youth with the digital skills and other proactive measures to help protect their safety and understand and exercise their rights online.

WHAT IS DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY?

“Digital media literacy is the ability to critically, effectively and responsibly access, use, understand and engage with media of all kinds.” (MediaSmarts (n.d))

WHERE CAN DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY BE APPLIED?

Digital media literacy should involve more than just the basics of online safety. It can be applied to every aspect of young people’s media lives, including:

- Social media platforms
- Use of mobile devices and applications
- Online search queries (e.g., avoid suspicious websites)
- Media production (e.g., designing content, copyright issues)

WHY IS DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY IMPORTANT FOR GBV PREVENTION IN SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION?

Incorporating digital media literacy into GBV prevention sexual health education programs is necessary to:

- Equip young people with the critical knowledge, information, and skills needed to navigate online spaces safely and respectfully.
- Teach youth to make informed choices and to foster and maintain healthy interactions in the digital age.
- Enable youth to critically analyze sexually-related media messages, recognize online harassment, understand consent in digital interactions, identify manipulative tactics, and address online exploitation.
- Prepare youth to understand and exercise their rights as citizens, consumers, and community members in their online spaces and use media tools to be engaged citizens offline.
- Empower youth to challenge harmful narratives and foster inclusivity and diversity, ensuring safer digital spaces and respectful relationships.

DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY KEY CONCEPTS

Young people are actively involved in consuming, creating, and publishing digital media. It is therefore crucial to teach youth how to critically analyze and apply ethical thinking when producing and consuming media. Students should be aware of the impact of digital media on their lives and the world around them.

MediaSmarts has identified new competencies that media education must consider in the age of networked digital media (MediaSmarts, n.d.). Adopting these concepts when designing and sharing lessons or activities for teaching digital media literacy can provide an effective foundation for examining media and popular culture.

This approach aims to equip students with the skills to become responsible and savvy media consumers and producers, and enhance their ability to navigate digital spaces responsibly in the context of GBV prevention in sexual health education.

SUMMARY OF MEDIA SMARTS' KEY CONCEPTS FOR DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY

MEDIA ARE CONSTRUCTIONS

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Media works are deliberate constructions made by creators with specific intentions, biases, and perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who created this media work? What is its purpose? What assumptions or beliefs do the creators have that are reflected in the content? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can critically analyze media portrayals of sexuality and relationships or media campaigns or works addressing GBV and sexual health, asking questions such as, "Who created this message and what impact does it have on our understanding of violence and relationships?"

MEDIA HAVE COMMERCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Commercial interests influence media production, shaping content, distribution, and audience engagement. Explore business models that shape media content and communication strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the commercial purpose of this media work? How does it influence content and communication strategies? What were the costs of creating and distributing this work? How did those costs influence its content? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how commercial interests might influence media messages about interpersonal relationships (e.g., dating relationships) and/or GBV prevention. Analyze advertisements and social media campaigns related to GBV prevention from a commercial perspective, considering their impacts.

MEDIA HAVE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Media shapes society, politics, and social change through agenda-setting and representation. Analyzing media biases is crucial in understanding their impact on audience perception.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who and what is shown in a positive/negative light? Why? What voices, perspectives, and experiences are missing in the media work? Which actions and behaviors are shown being rewarded? Which are punished? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the impact of media representations on social attitudes and beliefs regarding GBV, gender norms, and other relevant norms and stereotypes (e.g., sexual orientation, race). Analyze media portrayals of different gender, sexual, and racial identities and how such portrayals may impact attitudes and policies related to GBV and sexual health.

AUDIENCES NEGOTIATE MEANING

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Audience interpretations of media works are influenced by personal identity, experiences, and social context, thus diverse perspectives and alternative readings should be considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How might different people interpret this media work differently? How does the audience's identity influence their interpretation of media messages? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how cultural background and personal experiences shape individual responses to media content (e.g., students can consider how different individuals, including 2SLGBTQINA+ people, may experience or interpret media content in different ways). Analyze age-appropriate digital material about sexual health and discuss harmful societal norms and biases in media representations. Ask questions like "What stereotypes and biases are promoted and how can we challenge them?"

EACH MEDIUM HAS A UNIQUE AESTHETIC FORM

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Different types of media require specific literacy skills to interpret content, including the ability to understand codes, conventions, and storytelling techniques. Analyze the visual and auditory elements of media works, recognizing how they convey meaning and engage the audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does each medium engage its audience and convey its message? What are the expectations for print, TV, online video, and social networks? How does the medium affect GBV prevention message portrayal? What are the different expectations of different genres (e.g., romantic comedies, reaction videos, Instagram stories)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can compare and contrast different media techniques like posters, social media posts, or short films, asking, “How do different formats influence our understanding of gender, sexual orientation, and/or GBV prevention?” or “What creative strategies are used to portray relationships in this TV show?” Examine how visual elements, sound, and narrative structures convey messages about gender, sexuality, and relationships, while identifying problematic or positive media representations.

DIGITAL MEDIA ARE NETWORKED

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Digital media are interconnected, facilitating content sharing and collaboration. Understanding power dynamics, interactions, and the role of recommendation algorithms is crucial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways is the media work connected to networks and how do interactions within the network shape its dissemination? What is easy to access through this network? What is more difficult? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach students to identify false information about sexual health online by engaging in fact-checking exercises and discussions on reliable sources. Emphasize the impact of networked media in disseminating harmful ideas about gender through targeted algorithms, especially directed at young people. This involves educating students about how algorithms can be manipulated to promote messages and attitudes that contribute to GBV, including misogynistic, racist, homophobic, and transphobic content, as well as online communities that foster hate. Discuss social media’s role in spreading awareness about GBV prevention and explore online communities’ efforts to support it.

DIGITAL MEDIA ARE SHAREABLE AND PERSISTENT

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Digital content can have lasting positive and negative consequences. Consider the implications for privacy, curation, and unintended audiences when sharing digital content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How shareable and persistent is this digital content or message? What factors facilitate or hinder sharing this message? What implications does it have for privacy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present ethical dilemmas related to digital media interactions and platforms, such as cyberbullying, consent, sharing sensitive content, and privacy. Encourage discussions on ethical implications.

DIGITAL MEDIA HAVE UNEXPECTED AUDIENCES

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Online content can reach unexpected audiences, leading to context collapse and shaping their perceptions. Consider the intended and unintended audiences of online media and the impact of algorithms on content exposure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the intended and unintended audiences for this media work? How might the media work be interpreted differently if an unintended audience saw it? What are the responsibilities of sharing networked content? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a classroom activity, encourage students to practice creating evidence-based media (e.g., campaigns, videos, social media posts, infographics) that is accessible and focused on GBV-related topics (e.g., consent, healthy relationships, bodily autonomy). Discuss the choices made during the creation process, emphasizing the impact of media choices on audiences and explore strategies to minimize unintended exposure risks.

INTERACTIONS THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA HAVE REAL IMPACT

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Online actions have real-world consequences. Reflect on the moral and ethical aspects of online actions, understanding empathy, and recognizing the influence of online communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the moral and ethical implications of different online actions? How can networked tools have a positive impact on online and offline communities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to engage in respectful online discussions regarding GBV prevention (e.g., consent in digital image sharing). Discuss digital activism and the use of social media for advocacy in the context of GBV prevention. How can empathy be fostered in online interactions?

DIGITAL MEDIA EXPERIENCES ARE SHAPED BY THE TOOLS WE USE

Key Guide	Key Questions	Classroom Adaptations
Digital media experiences are shaped by the design, features, and defaults of the online platforms and tools we use. This includes the way content is created, shared, and consumed, as well as the behaviors and interactions of users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the design and defaults of digital platforms influence user behavior, content creation, and online interactions? What uses have people put the digital platform tool to that its makers did not anticipate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how social media algorithms impact GBV prevention content visibility and ways to evaluate digital tools' user interface and functionalities to prevent cyberviolence. Explore how the affordances (what you can do) and the defaults (what is easy or expected to do) of different apps influence the decisions we make when using them. (e.g., consent in digital image sharing or reporting on cyberbullying/harassment and technology-facilitated sexual violence). Assign students to review digital content and publish their analyses on class blogs to hone their media literacy and critical expression skills.

See Media Smarts [Key Concepts for Digital Media Literacy](#) for more information.

DIGITAL LIFE SKILLS FOR YOUTH

Self-awareness	<p>Learn to show empathy and respect for your own needs and others online. Identify online activities that contribute to your emotional well-being.</p> <p>Example: Students learn to respect their own and others' boundaries in online interactions. They can identify activities that promote emotional well-being.</p>
Model good digital behaviour	<p>Youth can learn to engage in online environments in positive ways (e.g., communicating clearly, asking for consent for digital images and information sharing) and model these behaviours with their peers (e.g., in group chats, when using social media with friends etc.).</p> <p>Example: Students understand that they should ask their friends for consent before posting group photos on social media.</p>
Create offline time	<p>Taking time to unplug from technology daily to enjoy other activities is important. Young people can create a plan to balance online and offline activities (e.g., playing outdoors or reading a book).</p> <p>Example: Educators can encourage students to balance online activities with offline experiences. Develop strategies for taking time offline, promoting activities like face-to-face communication, outdoor play, or engaging in hobbies.</p>
Safe and healthy relationships	<p>Establish healthy relationships and boundaries when connecting with others online. Youth should understand ways to de-escalate or step away from conflict online.</p> <p>Example: Students learn to recognize signs of unhealthy relationships online, including controlling behavior or harassment. They are empowered to set boundaries, report abuse, and seek support when needed, promoting safe interactions. Teach students to recognize "hot" emotions which may cause them to react aggressively to online incidents and to be aware that online communication can create an "empathy trap" making it difficult to read how someone else feels.</p>
Privacy protection	<p>Limit sharing and protect personal information online and respect others' privacy. Understand the difference between private and personal information and how to keep private information safe.</p> <p>Example: Students can understand the importance of safeguarding private and personal information, including intimate images. Educate young people about the legal and moral consequences of sharing explicit content without consent, emphasizing privacy and consent in digital interactions.</p>

Critical thinking	<p>Critical thinking is an essential skill that helps students distinguish between accurate and false information, beneficial and harmful content, and reliable and biased sources online. Critical thinking includes knowing how to stay safe while browsing the internet and interacting with others online. It also means being aware of one's biases and questioning why we want to believe or disprove something.</p> <p>Example: Students can develop critical thinking skills to discern reliable sexual health information online. Teach young people how to identify reputable sources, debunk myths, and recognize signs of manipulation.</p>
Digital citizenship	<p>Refers to the ability to understand and fulfill one's roles and responsibilities in the online world. Online citizenship involves understanding cyberbullying prevention, the spread of online hate, copyright law, and cultural awareness.</p> <p>Example: Explore topics like cyberbullying, consent in online relationships, and respectful communication with students. Engaging in discussions about online hate and cultural sensitivity can help students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • become aware of their rights and responsibilities, • help them develop a sense of responsibility and empathy in the digital world.
See MediaSmarts (2022)	

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING KEY CRITICAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM:

- Incorporate digital media literacy into existing educational goals and curriculum: Check out MediaSmarts' [list of digital media literacy outcomes](#) to see where digital media literacy fits in the curriculum of each province and territory. Analyze media portrayals of relationships, highlighting healthy communication and consent. Compare media representations with real-life experiences, fostering critical thinking about relationship dynamics.
- Discuss digital conflicts, such as cyberbullying and explore non-violent methods of addressing online harassment. Emphasize the importance of de-escalation and seeking help when needed.
- Discuss the role of technology in dating apps and online relationships. Emphasize the importance of explicit digital consent and respecting boundaries in online interactions, educating students about potential risks and respectful communication online.
- Guide students in setting healthy digital boundaries. Discuss scenarios that involve sharing intimate content and emphasize the importance of mutual consent. Set expectations and guidelines for respectful online behavior and digital tool usage.
- Create open and safe spaces for students to discuss their digital experiences. Initiate conversations and encourage discussion by asking questions, such as:
 - What are your thoughts on this article or source?
 - Why do you think certain privacy settings exist on your phone?
 - Did you ever feel unsafe online? Have you ever interacted with someone online that made you uncomfortable?
- Engage students in research projects about GBV prevention sexual health education initiatives. Analyze media campaigns and encourage collaborative learning. Students can collectively produce informative content to enhance their understanding and promote teamwork.

See the [Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention in School-Based CSHE](#) pg. 12–38 for age and grade-appropriate teaching approaches.

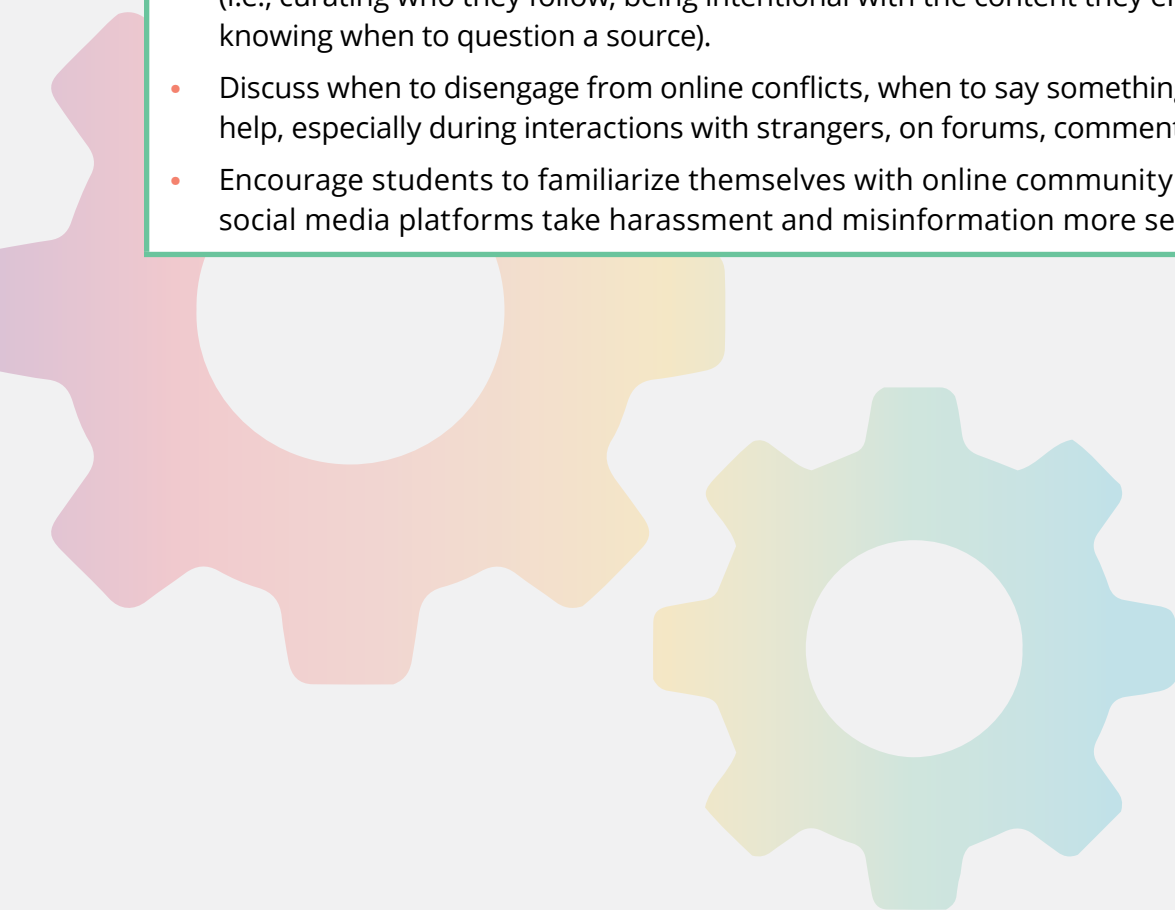


Activity

REFLECTION EXERCISE

- What support systems can schools put in place to help survivors/victims of cyberbullying? How can we raise awareness about the impact of cyberbullying among peers?
- How can we promote respectful online dialogue? What educational initiatives can combat online hate?
- How can we prioritize transformative justice when we become aware of a student engaging in cyberbullying or bullying in general? (See pg. 51 for more information about transformative justice)
- How can we empower students who witness cyberbullying to intervene positively? See [*MediaSmarts – Cyberbullying*](#)

ACTION STEPS

- Discuss with the class how they can curate healthy, positive, and informative online spaces (i.e., curating who they follow, being intentional with the content they engage with, and knowing when to question a source).
 - Discuss when to disengage from online conflicts, when to say something, and when to seek help, especially during interactions with strangers, on forums, comment threads, etc.
 - Encourage students to familiarize themselves with online community guidelines; some social media platforms take harassment and misinformation more seriously than others.
- 

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- Brainstorm potential problems with online communication and ways to resolve those problems. Use the digital media literacy key concepts described above as a guiding framework.
- How can we differentiate between reliable and false sexual health and/or GBV information online? What fact-checking tools can we use?
- How is sharing an image of someone, without their consent, a violation of their privacy, trust, and rights?
- What issues do we need to consider when sharing intimate images online or via text messages?
- What steps can you take to protect your own digital privacy?
- How does the media (news, movies, music) represent abuse in ways that might harm survivors/victims? How do we challenge this as a community?
- What are our rights and responsibilities when we are in online spaces? (e.g., the right to safety and responsibility to not violate other people's rights to safety).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [*Digital Media Literacy topics*](#)
- [*Use, Understand & Engage: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian School*](#)
- [*Classroom Guide – Integrating Digital Literacy into your Classroom Practice*](#)
- [*Digital Literacy 101*](#)
- [*Building Healthy Relationships with Media – A Parent's Guide to Media Literacy*](#)



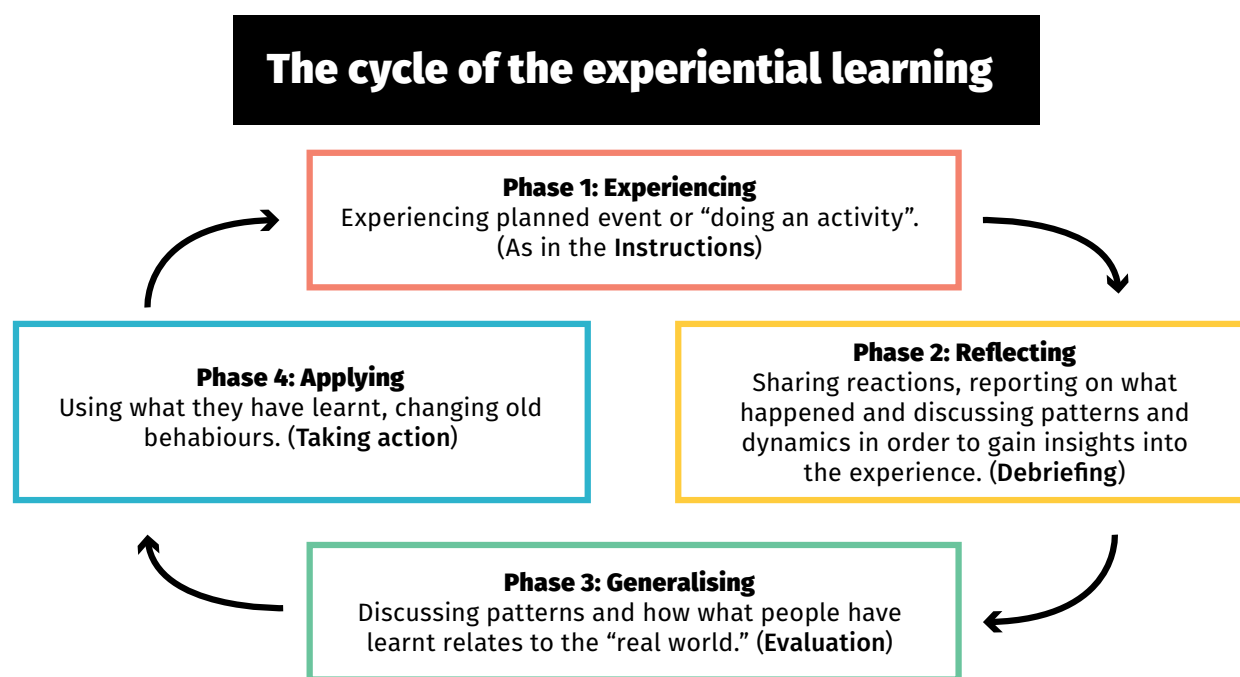
Human Rights Education and Transformative Justice

Sexual health education should focus on human rights as a central component of GBV prevention (SIECCAN, 2023a). Young people have fundamental rights related to their sexual and reproductive health (e.g., personal autonomy, bodily integrity, security of person, equality, privacy, dignity, etc.).

Educating young people about consent, respectful relationships, and gender equality empowers them to make informed decisions, assert bodily autonomy, challenge discrimination, and actively contribute to a just society. A human rights approach to sexual health education can help foster a culture of respect and equality, and safeguard everyone's right to live free from violence.

APPROACHES TO TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS IN GBV PREVENTION

- **Using Experiential Learning:** It can be challenging to learn effective communication, critical thinking, and respect through traditional teaching methods. Instead, experiential learning may be necessary for understanding GBV prevention and promoting human rights. For example, interactive sessions can be organized where students participate in debates or role-playing exercises based on real-life scenarios. This hands-on approach can help students understand the complexities of GBV and how to advocate for positive change.



Source: *Compass – Manual for Human Rights Education with young people*, Council of Europe, October 2012.

- Integrate human rights information into the school curriculum, lesson plans, and class activities. Students should learn about their own sexual health rights and those of others. Interactive teaching methods such as stories, debates, role-playing exercises, and games can engage students in analyzing and applying their knowledge of human rights to real-life situations in their school and community settings.
- Encourage active participation and use student-friendly versions of the [*Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child*](#) to help young people understand, protect, and respect human rights in the classroom and school environment. See the [*Benchmarks for Integrating GBV Prevention in School-Based CSHE pg. 12 – 38*](#) for age and grade-appropriate teaching approaches.
- Create a code of conduct and collaborate with students to determine what behaviors are acceptable, unacceptable, and necessary in the classroom. This helps ensure that everyone understands their rights and responsibilities.

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

Transformative Justice (TJ) is an approach to education that values healing, safety, community, dialogue, and inclusivity over punishment or exclusion (Generation Five, 2017).

TJ aims to address the underlying factors that generate and perpetuate gender oppression, violence, trauma, discrimination, and other societal problems. To effectively implement a TJ approach in the classroom, educators may need to modify their teaching methods. This could mean incorporating collaborative and experiential learning activities and prioritizing the social and emotional well-being of their students. By aligning their approach with the principles of TJ, teachers can help create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

PRINCIPLES OF TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE AND TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS

Healing and Safety

It is imperative to prioritize students' comfort and safety when discussing sensitive topics (e.g., those related to the body, identity, relationships, etc.). Educators play an important role in this process by creating safe spaces, collaborating with students to establish classroom guidelines that promote respect and inclusivity, being mindful of potential trauma in students' lives, and offering resources for support and self-care.

Accountability

Accountability is a powerful tool for transformation. The accountability process empowers young people to take responsibility, make amends, and cultivate a sense of responsibility towards themselves and those around them, even if the harm was unintentional.

- **Healthy Communication and Accountability:** Help students understand that accountability involves more than simply apologizing; accountability includes understanding the impact of their actions, making amends, and committing to positive change. Healthy communication skills should focus on identifying the root cause of harm and working collectively to heal. See [*Saying “Sorry” isn’t enough, you have to DO Sorry*](#) by Common Justice.
- **Empowering Students:** Encourage students to actively engage in restorative practices, fostering a sense of accountability towards their actions and their impact on others. For example, conduct an interactive workshop where students engage in scenario-based activities. For instance, in a restorative justice workshop, students can role-play scenarios involving harm and resolution. Then, take turns being the harmed party, the harmer, and the mediator. This hands-on experience can empower them to actively participate in conflict resolution and accountability.

Prevention and Commitment: Emphasize the importance of prevention in accountability. Students should understand that being accountable means committing to preventing future harm. Educators can use activities such as creative writing, art, poetry, sharing stories, facilitated discussions, role-play exercises and organizing school events to raise awareness on GBV prevention. For example, students can create a “Commitment to Respect” board where they write down actions to prevent harm and promote respect. Commitments could include intervening when they witness bullying, apologizing sincerely if they hurt someone, or seeking help when they feel overwhelmed.



REFLECTION EXERCISE

- What specific rights are disrespected or violated in acts of violence?
- How can human rights and diversity be promoted and respected in schools?
- Consider recent classroom discussions. Were there moments where human rights principles were effectively integrated?
- Reflect on how conflicts or disagreements have been resolved in your classroom. Were these situations approached with a transformative justice perspective? What barriers might prevent you from using this approach in your classroom or school?

ACTION STEPS

- Identify opportunities within your curriculum to integrate human rights discussions, emphasizing respect, consent, and equality.
- Educate yourself and your colleagues about trauma-informed educational approaches.
- Organize workshops led by students, focusing on healthy communication, empathy, and accountability.
- Implement a system for reporting violent incidents anonymously, ensuring students feel safe to speak up.
- Invite human rights organizations from your area to your classroom for community-oriented education (e.g., migrant rights, disability justice, 2SLGBTQINA+ rights, Indigenous sovereignty, etc.).



GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- What are some fundamental human rights and how do they relate to our daily lives?
- In terms of bodily autonomy, do you believe everyone has the right to make decisions about their own body? Can you think of situations where individuals' autonomy over their bodies might be challenged or restricted? How can society ensure this right is protected for everyone?
- How can understanding our rights empower us to prevent GBV in our communities?
- How can taking responsibility for our actions in resolving conflicts contribute to healing and a positive learning environment?
- How can we promote respect and consent within our peer groups and in our school community?
- How can we cultivate empathy towards and work with survivors/victims and perpetrators of harmful behavior in meaningful ways?
- What proactive steps can we take as a classroom community to prevent GBV and ensure that prevention efforts are continuously evolving?
- What barriers might exist that prevent some people from accessing accurate GBV support services and/or sexual health information/services?
- How can young people advocate for sexual and reproductive health rights within their communities and beyond?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [*Compass – a manual for human rights education with young people*](#)
- [*Activities to address gender and gender-based violence with young people*](#)
- [*Toward Transformative Justice*](#)
- [*Ending Child Sexual Abuse: A Transformative Justice Handbook*](#)
- [*Introduction to Community Organizing Toolkit*](#)
- [*Everyday Practices of Transformative Justice*](#)

Information on Reporting Abuse and Disclosures

Children and young people may sometimes find it easier to confide in teachers and school staff when they experience abuse. Given the content of GBV prevention sexual health education topics, it is possible that educators will experience disclosures from students.

It is important for educators to be well-informed about the signs of abuse, to be familiar with reporting procedures, and to understand the strategies that can help young people feel safe and secure in their learning environment.

Educators have a legal obligation to report abuse and may inform their students of their own duty to report. Even if a student discloses in confidence, if it meets the criteria for reporting, the teacher must notify child protective services by law. Educators may feel unsure about how to respond to such disclosures, particularly if they have not received training. While there is no one right way to handle disclosures of GBV, it can be helpful to offer support and validate the person's experience.

Disclosure is more of a process than a one-time event.

Dealing with disclosures of abuse, especially in a school or educational setting, can be a challenging situation. It is essential to handle it with sensitivity, empathy, and a commitment to the safety and well-being of the individuals involved. Educators should inform students about the school's reporting procedures for GBV and emphasize that responding to disclosures of GBV is a shared responsibility. If students are unsure about the best course of action, they should consult with a teacher, trusted adult, or a designated authority figure who can provide guidance and support. Supporting survivors and promoting a safe environment should be prioritized.

Receive and listen

- Find a safe and quiet place where the child or young person feels comfortable and can focus without distractions.
- Stay calm and patient, putting aside any personal biases or judgments. Show empathy and maintain a calm demeanor.
- Give the child or young person your undivided attention and listen actively to what they have to say.
- Remember that disclosing can be difficult, so allow the child or young person time to express themselves in their own words.

Child Family Community Australia (2015)

Reassure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure the child or young person it is right to tell you what has been happening. • Understand that the child or young person may only share what they are comfortable with and acknowledge their bravery for talking about a difficult topic. • Address any concerns about their safety and well-being. • Ease any fears they may have about sharing their experience.
Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note down any comments exactly as they were said. This applies to statements made by the child/young person, parent, caregiver or anyone else involved in the situation. • Record the date, time, location, wording used by the child/young person and their appearance at the time of the comment. Be specific and accurate in your documentation.
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage expectations and avoid making promises you cannot keep when talking to a child or young person. For example, if a young person asks you to keep their disclosure a secret, you should not make that promise. Instead, you can reassure the child by saying you will do everything you can to keep them safe. • Let the child or young person know what you plan to do next. • Inform the child or young person of the available support options. It is important to explain that contacting the appropriate authorities is necessary to ensure their safety. • When a child or young person discloses sensitive information in a large group or classroom, it can be harmful to their well-being and that of other students (e.g., vicarious trauma, retraumatization for students who have experienced abuse, etc.). In such situation, educators can gently guide the conversation away, assuring the student of a private follow-up discussion. This approach safeguards classmates from exposure to the details and protects the student from potential negative consequences of disclosing (e.g., rumors or victim-blaming comments). A private follow-up conversation between the educator and the student should be scheduled to address the comment or potential disclosure. • If disclosures occur during class discussion, consider ways to support the other students in the class who may experience stress and/or vicarious trauma. This could include following up with the class at a separate time to discuss the topic generally to answer any questions. • If necessary, seek support for yourself after the disclosure.

Child Family Community Australia (2015)

Educators may unintentionally let their personal biases affect their decision to report abuse. For example, biases may stem from a student's or family's background or from previous interactions. To ensure fairness, educators need to recognize and overcome race, class, or gender-based biases they may have learned to avoid educator bias and skewed reporting statistics. Educators can do this by reflecting on their own beliefs, seeking training and support from peers, and familiarizing themselves with examples that challenge gender and racial stereotypes. Additionally, it's important to examine biases and document your reasoning to make a fair decision as outlined in the strategies for responding to disclosures above.

Prioritize the child's or young person's safety above personal concerns.

It is crucial to know about the mandatory reporting policies and procedures in your school, boards, and province/territory for cases of violence against minors. When mandatory reporting is required, it is important to explain the process, reasons, and possible outcomes to the student. You can find out more about your local Children's Aid Society reporting policies and use the school board or school-specific policies for additional guidance.



Activity

REFLECTION EXERCISE

- How can recognizing/addressing our own biases and stereotypes positively impact our interactions with students, especially in sensitive situations?
- Reflect on your own beliefs and biases. Are there any gender-based assumptions or stereotypes that might influence your responses to students' disclosures or interactions with students, especially in sensitive situations?
- Assess your active listening skills. How well do you respond to students' concerns? Are you empathetic and patient in your approach?
- Review your knowledge of mandatory reporting policies. Are you familiar with the specific procedures in your school, board, and/or province/territory?

ACTION STEPS

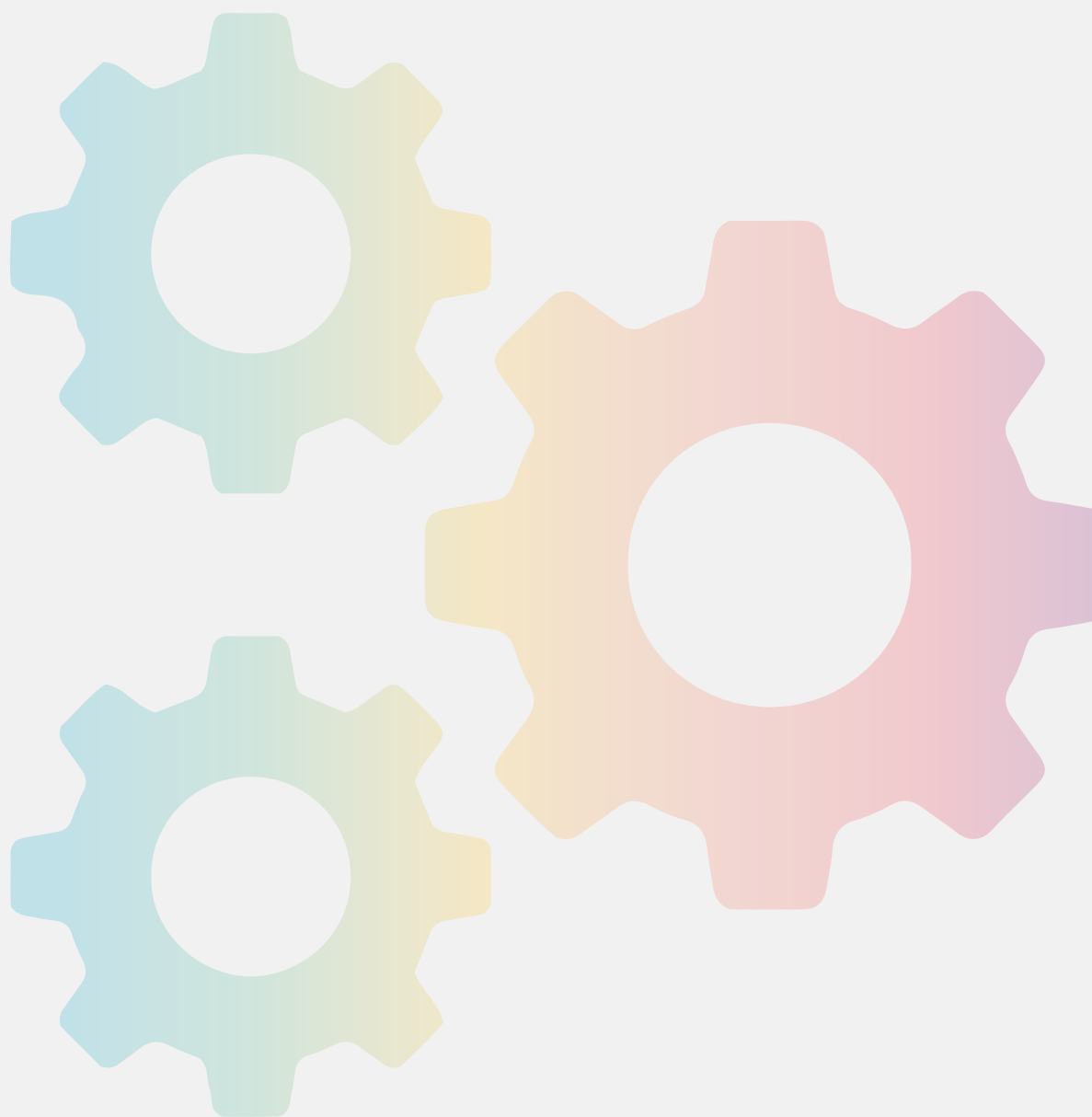
- Evaluate your classroom setup. Is there a designated safe space where students can talk privately if needed? Ensure the space is comfortable and free from distractions.
- Refresh your understanding of mandatory reporting policies in your area. Stay up to date with any changes in procedures.
- Prepare a list of local resources, such as counseling services and helplines that you can provide to students when necessary.
- Facilitate regular meetings among colleagues to discuss reporting guidelines, policy changes, and training opportunities. Cultivate a collaborative environment for sharing insights and resources, ensuring the team remains informed, aligned, and engaged in professional development, particularly in the context of GBV prevention and sexual health education.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- Ask students to suggest helpful strategies teachers can use to ensure that their responses are empathetic and patient when students disclose sensitive information.
- Ask students to compose a list of trusted people in their lives who could help them report or disclose problems and challenges, including abuse. This can include family members, friends, teachers, counselors, and neighbors, etc.
- How can we check in on our friends when their behavior suddenly changes?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [*“Child Sexual Abuse — It Is Your Business”*](#)
- Almanssori, S., Trent-Rennick, K., Lai, A., & Vanner, C. (2023). [*Teaching about gender-based violence toolkit*](#). Gender-Based Violence Teaching Network, University of Windsor.
- Samantha Shewchuk, “Children in Need of Protection: Reporting policies in Ontario school boards,” *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy* 162 (2014).



Engaging Parents/Caregivers in Teaching GBV Prevention

Parents/caregivers play a vital role in shaping their child's understanding of gender, gender roles, gender equality, and fostering healthy relationships. They are in a unique position to:

- Start teaching young people about consent, boundaries, and healthy relationships.
- Dismantle gender and sexuality-related myths and promote gender-equitable relationships in the family.
- Shape and develop their child's behaviours and attitudes related to interpersonal relationships and sexuality.
- Serve as positive role models for a range of behaviours, including effective communication, relationship skills, and socially acceptable behaviours.
- Monitor and support their children's offline and online activities, including providing guidance on risks and safety measures.

WHAT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS WANT

Findings from a national survey in Canada showed that most parents/caregivers:

- Are in favor of sexual health education that is evidence-based, inclusive, relevant, promotes gender equality and autonomous decision-making, and is provided by knowledgeable educators.
- Support the inclusion of a wide variety of sexual health education topics and believe that most topics should be introduced in the elementary/middle school grades.
- Believe that sexual health education should cover topics related to GBV prevention (e.g., personal safety, consent, healthy relationships, media literacy, etc.).

SIECCAN (2019); Loveless et al., (2023); Wood et al. (2021)

Positive Parent/Caregiver Skills to Promote GBV Prevention

Positive parenting means creating a nurturing environment, setting boundaries, and guiding children through non-violent parental behaviours to reach their full potential. It requires positive communication and modeling to help develop confident, compassionate, and respectful individuals. Parents/caregivers can improve their GBV prevention sexual health education parenting skills through:

- Initiating open dialogue about sexual health, relationships, and personal safety, along with supervision and role-playing. This can create a supportive environment for children to discuss sensitive topics and prepare for challenging situations (Lee et al., 2021).
- Using active and interactive learning techniques like role-playing, practising, and modelling skills, and watching educational videos to teach about GBV prevention and sexual health.
- Encouraging healthy behaviors with positive communication, clear boundaries, and directions.
- Encouraging children/youth to practice and apply GBV prevention sexual health education skills, set goals, and share positive experiences at home.

STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATORS TO FOSTER PARENT/CAREGIVERS' INVOLVEMENT

It is important that educators work collaboratively with parents/caregivers to help challenge rigid and harmful norms and values related to violence and gender inequality.

Here are some helpful suggestions:

- Ensure parents/caregivers are informed and engaged about GBV prevention sexual health education activities. This can involve regular communication (e.g., through parent-teacher meetings, messages, or telephone conversations) to discuss the curriculum and learning outcomes, the current lesson, and/or the progress of the student.
- Collaborate with other educators and school staff to create events and activities for parents/caregivers to engage with their child's schooling. This can involve organizing plays or performances, hosting guest speakers, or inviting parents/caregivers to participate in relevant classroom activities.
- Be proactive in identifying potential issues or concerns that may arise with a student's behavior. If you observe warning signs of violence or aggression, it is crucial to reach out to parents/caregivers.

It is important that educators work collaboratively with parents/caregivers to help challenge rigid and harmful norms and values related to violence and gender inequality.

Here are some helpful suggestions:

- When dealing with a violent or aggressive student, contact parents/caregivers and document all important information. Maintain contact with parents/caregivers and monitor the student's behavior. While going through the reparative process, focus on highlighting their strengths and encouraging growth.
- Offer parents/caregivers evidence-based resources and materials to enhance their knowledge of GBV prevention in sexual health education. This can aide them in supporting their children's learning (e.g., having conversations at home about gender-based bullying, dating violence, abuse, cyberbullying, healthy relationships, communication, etc.).
- Communicate clear policies on sexual harassment, abuse, bullying, gender inequality, 2SLGBTQINA+ affirmative policies and technology-facilitated violence to parents/caregivers in school environments.
- Encourage community involvement, such as community partners or organizations in school committees, and parent-teacher associations, and developing gender-responsive policies and programs to prevent GBV. This collaboration also benefits both parties by giving parents/caregivers access to community resources and promoting engagement in their child's education.

REFLECTION EXERCISE

- Do you have a designated area for parents/caregivers to communicate with staff or each other about GBV prevention sexual health education topics?
- Consider your approach to discussing sensitive topics. How can you facilitate open and non-judgmental dialogue with parents/caregivers?
- How do you handle challenging situations and involve parents/caregivers in finding solutions related to GBV prevention?
- Reflect on your knowledge of available resources for parents/caregivers. Are you aware of the tools and materials that can aid parents in initiating conversations about GBV prevention and sexual health with their children?

ACTION STEPS

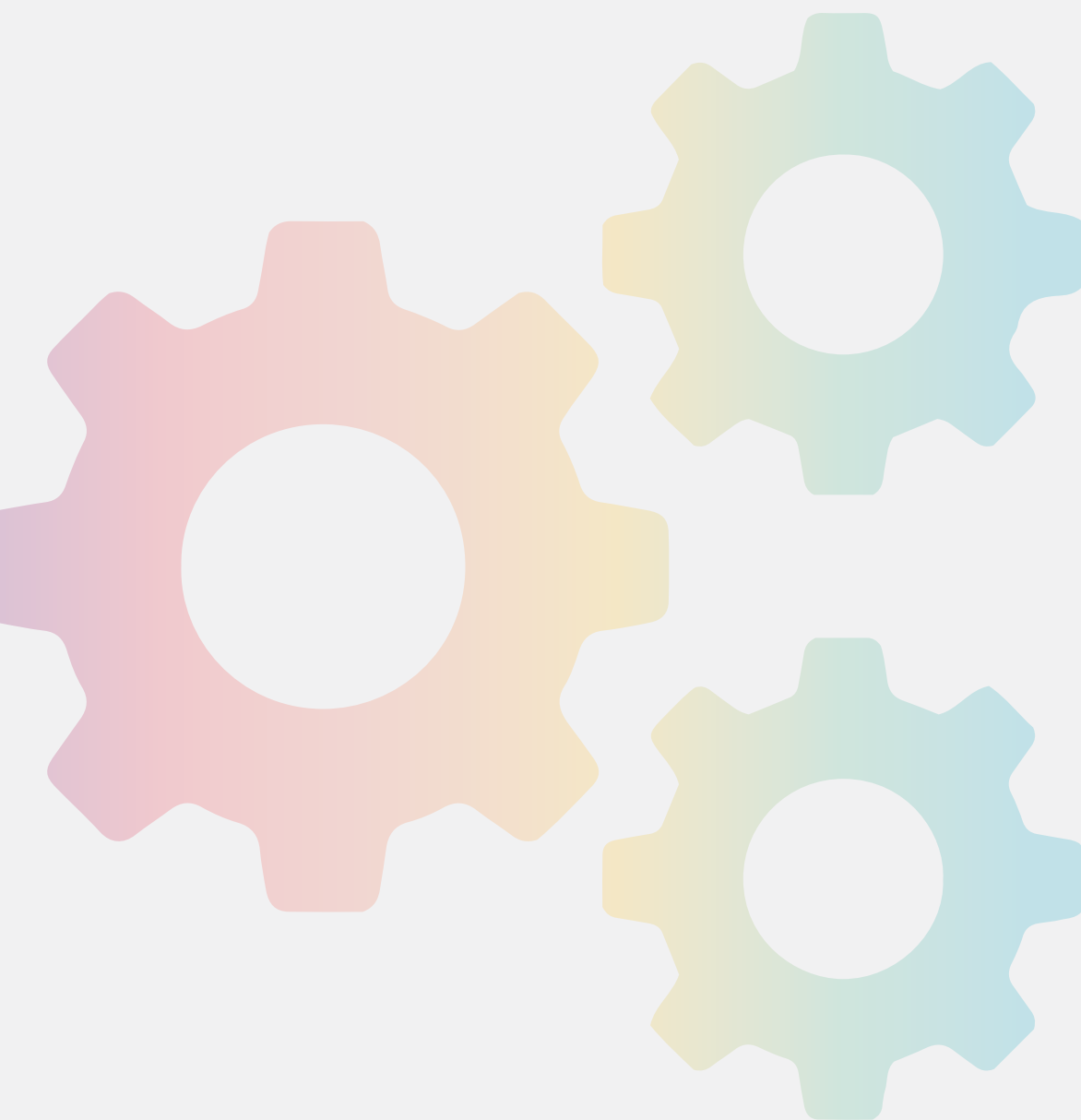
- Establish regular communication channels with parents/caregivers, utilizing meetings, messages, and phone conversations to discuss students' progress and address concerns.
- Focus on highlighting students' strengths and growth while addressing challenges. Engage parents/caregivers in constructive discussions about their child's development.
- Suggest available resources, tools, and materials that can aid parents/caregivers in initiating conversations about GBV, and sexual health with their children.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- How can we improve our communication strategies with parents/caregivers in order to ensure that they are well-informed about GBV prevention and sexual health education activities in our school?
- What methods can we employ to create a safe and non-judgmental space for parents/caregivers to discuss sensitive topics with us?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [*Attitudes Towards Sexual Health Education in Schools: A National Survey of Parents in Canada*](#)
- SIECCAN. (2020). [*Questions & Answers: Sexual Health Education in Schools and Other Settings*](#). Toronto, ON: Sex Information & Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN)
- [*Bullying – What Parents Need to Know*](#). Prevnet
- [*Preventing Youth Dating Violence – What Parents and Caregivers Need to Know*](#). Prevnet



Self-Support and Advocacy for Educators

Educators often experience stress while managing classroom activities. Teaching sensitive topics like GBV prevention and sexuality can be challenging. If educators are unable to manage and express their emotions effectively, it can create an unstable and unsupported environment for students. Additionally, educators may feel the pressure to solve all problems on their own, which can add to their stress levels. However, self-care is one important aspect of maintaining mental health and well-being. Setting boundaries and recognizing limitations can be helpful in reducing stress in the classroom.

PRACTICES FOR SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT

- **Prioritizing your own well-being:**
 - Allocate time for yourself each day to reflect (e.g., through journaling or mindful meditation). Reflecting can solidify learning from past experiences and prepare for future ones. Scheduling time to contemplate your teaching practices, whether daily, weekly, or monthly, can be especially beneficial when learning new techniques/content.
 - Set boundaries to balance work and personal life. Practice and find ways to say “no” when you need to and set limits on your time.
- **Engaging in hobbies and creative outlets:** Having a hobby or creative outlet can provide a mental break and bring personal satisfaction.
- **Practice gratitude:** Expressing gratitude regularly can help to reduce stress levels and improve the overall sense of well-being in your classroom and school environment (Allen, 2018). Cultivate gratitude by keeping a daily journal; write down what you are thankful for each day to acknowledge the positive aspects of your life and/or work.
- **Support from family and friends:** Having a support system of loved ones, family, and friends can be invaluable when facing challenges in your professional life.
- **Seeking professional help if needed:** If you are feeling overwhelmed and struggling, consider seeking professional help from a therapist or counselor for guidance and support.

SYSTEMIC SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

A holistic approach is essential to prevent GBV. Schools should adopt a comprehensive approach that prioritizes the well-being of educators involved in GBV prevention efforts. A comprehensive approach involves creating a supportive environment and implementing systemic support measures to promote safety and well-being.

Here are some resources and strategies to consider:

- **Counseling Services:** Determine if your school or organization/board/association offers counseling services for both students and educators. These services should be well-promoted and easily accessible.
- **Support Groups:** Establish support groups or networks for educators to discuss their experiences, share coping strategies, and seek assistance in dealing with the emotional toll of GBV prevention efforts.
- **Training and Professional Development:** Advocate for regular training sessions for educators to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to address GBV in the school environment and effectively integrate GBV prevention into sexual health education. Collaborating with credible external organizations or experts can be beneficial in offering insights, resources, and best practices.
- **Access to Resources:** Provide educators with access to a comprehensive library of resources, such as books, articles, videos, and lesson plans, to aid them in their GBV prevention sexual health education efforts and trauma-informed teaching. Access [SIECCAN's GBV Prevention Sexual Health Education Portal](#) for relevant resources.

See the [Guidelines for Integrating GBV Prevention in School-Based CSHE](#) for more information on creating structural supports pg. 28.

REFLECTION EXERCISE

- Reflect on your best day this week. What made it great? How can you incorporate similar positive elements into your routine?
- On your worst day this week, what was happening? How did it affect your well-being? What steps can you take to improve similar situations in the future?
- Consider how daily reflection can serve as a tool for managing stress, especially when teaching sensitive topics like GBV prevention.
- Reflect on your experiences as a survivor and/or ally to survivors. How does teaching GBV prevention in sexual health education impact your well-being and emotional state? What self-care practices can you implement to support yourself? What support resources are available to you?
- Explore effective boundary-setting techniques. How can you strike a balance between your professional responsibilities and personal well-being? What boundaries are essential for your mental and emotional health?
- Assess the resources and support available to you in your current role. Do you have the necessary tools and assistance to teach GBV prevention sexual health education effectively? If you are lacking support, identify the appropriate channels to inform and seek help. What steps can you take to remedy the situation and create a supportive environment?
- What systemic supports for GBV prevention in sexual health education are in your school community? For example:

Teaching and learning:

- Does my curriculum include a range of relevant GBV prevention sexual health education topics?
- Reflect on the inclusivity of teaching materials and curriculum in your classroom. Are there diverse resources that reflect a range of bodies and identities? How can you enhance inclusivity in your teaching materials?

Partnerships and services:

- What am I/is my school doing to develop and maintain partnerships with credible community-based GBV prevention and sexual health organizations.

Policy:

- What policies does my school have in place to prevent homophobic/transphobic bullying?
- Are GBV-related policies clear and transparent to staff and students (e.g., reporting policies)?
- What policies could be improved in my school community to help support GBV prevention sexual health education?

ACTION STEPS

- If possible, dedicate time each day for personal reflection through journaling or mindful meditation. Use this practice to process emotions and experiences related to teaching GBV prevention in sexual health education.
- Facilitate the creation of peer support groups and mentorship programs within the school community. Encourage open dialogue and sharing of coping strategies among educators.
- Advocate for clear, transparent, and inclusive GBV-related policies within the school community. Work collaboratively with school leadership and staff to improve existing policies and ensure they are accessible to all stakeholders.
- Pursue professional development opportunities related to GBV prevention, sexual health education and self-care. Attend workshops, seminars, or online courses to enhance your skills and knowledge in these areas.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [*Self-care tips for teachers. UNICEF*](#)
- [*Teacher Self-Care Activities. Waterford*](#)
- [*Palmer, P \(2019\). Why teachers need to care about self-care*](#)
- [*Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health \(2016\). Comprehensive school health framework 2-pager*](#)
- [*HEARTCare Planning*](#)

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Appendix

A. GBV PREVENTION TOPICS ADDRESSED IN CURRENT PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL CURRICULA

Alberta

Subject	Grade	Topics
Physical Education and Wellness	Kindergarten–Grade 6	Sexual relationship, consent
Health and Life Skills Grade	Grade 7–9	Sexuality, gender roles and equity, various forms of GBV, safer sex practices, sexual assault

British Columbia

Subject	Grade	Topics
Physical and Health Education	Kindergarten–Grade 10	Positive/healthy relationships (including communication, abuse, exploitation, respect, peer pressure), consent, internet safety, bullying, safety

Manitoba

Subject	Grade	Topics
Physical Education/Health Education	Kindergarten–Grade 10	Sexual abuse and exploitation, physical and verbal violence, bullying, peer pressure, right to privacy, healthy relationships, safety, anger management, bullying, conflict resolution

New Brunswick

Subject	Grade	Topics
You and Your World	Kindergarten–Grade 2	Conflict-resolution skills
Personal Wellness	Grades 3–8	Personal safety, bullying, conflict resolution, relational aggression, interpersonal relationships, healthy relationships, antidiscrimination, media messages about bodies, sexuality, and relationships

Newfoundland & Labrador

Subject	Grade	Topics
Health	Grade 1–9	Self-respect and respect for others, setting and communicating boundaries, decision-making skills, harassment, physical abuse, male/female stereotyping, peer pressure, confidentiality and privacy, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, healthy interpersonal relationships, dating behaviours, and communication skills

North West Territories

Subject	Grade	Topics
Junior Kindergarten / Kindergarten Curriculum	Kindergarten	Healthy relationships, personal safety, body dynamics, self-image, decision making
Health Studies	Grade 1–9	Personal safety, boundaries, assertive communication skills, sexual abuse and assault, sexual pressure, forms of violence, family violence, gender role stereotyping

Nova Scotia

Subject	Grade	Topics
Health Education	Grades 1–6	Healthy and safe friendships, peer relationships, consent, respect, boundaries, safety, communication and interpersonal skills
Healthy Living	Grades 7–9	Healthy relationships, safe relationships online and offline, sexual exploitation, sexual violence, respecting the rights of others, communication and interpersonal skills, assertiveness and refusal skills

Nunavut

Subject	Grade	Topics
School Health	Kindergarten–Grade 9	Information not currently available on the website

Ontario

Subject	Grade	Topics
Health and Physical Education	Grades 1–8	Healthy relationships, respect, consent, well-being and safety, bullying, abuse, exploitation, or harassment, non-consensual behaviours, violent situations, cyberbullying, use of communication and digital technology, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, violence in intimate and sexual relationships, gender-based violence, racially-based violence, role of support services in preventing violence
Healthy Active Living Education	Grade 9–12	Use of electronic communication technology, gender identity and sexual orientation, sexual decision making, health sexuality, sexual health and safety, healthy social relationships, intimate relationships, harassment, violence and abuse in relationships verbal, physical, and social bullying, personal and interpersonal skills, communication, coping, and conflict resolution skills

Prince Edward Island

Subject	Grade	Topics
Health Grades	Grades 1–9	Unsafe or abusive situations, conflict resolution strategy, respect for others, safety, passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviours, anger management, communication skills, abusive and healthy relationships, harassment, media violence, choice and coercion in decision-making, sexual assault, types of abuse, sexual orientation, available community support for abusive relationships
Physical Education	Grade 10	Healthy relationships, decision making, communication, safety, sexual health issues and harmful behaviours

Quebec

Subject	Grade	Topics
Sexuality Education	Elementary and Secondary	Sexual assault or violence, stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity, discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, respecting sexual diversity and differences, healthy relationships and consent

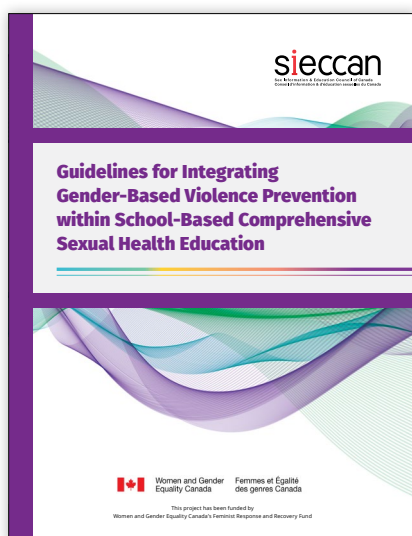
Saskatchewan

Subject	Grade	Topics
Health Education	Kindergarten–Grade 9	Healthy relationships, safety and protection, cyber safety respect, types and impacts of violence, peer pressure, healthy decision, interpersonal skills, gender norms and expectations

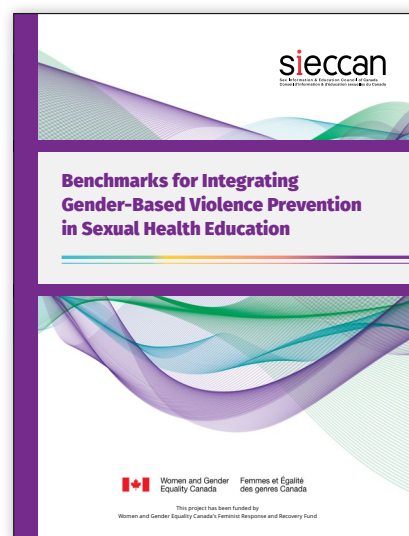
Yukon

Subject	Grade	Topics
<i>Note: Uses an adapted British Columbia curriculum (see BC curriculum above)</i>		
Comprehensive sexual health education	Kindergarten–Grade 12	Personal space, sexual decision-making, safe vs. unsafe touch, body image, sexual abuse and exploitation, gender stereotypes/bullying, healthy relationships, communication skills and assertive refusal, conflict resolution, peer pressure, affection and boundaries

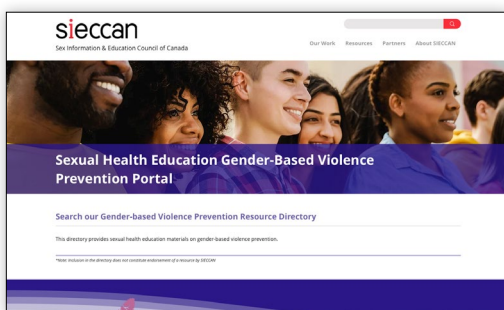
B. SIECCAN'S GBV PREVENTION RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS



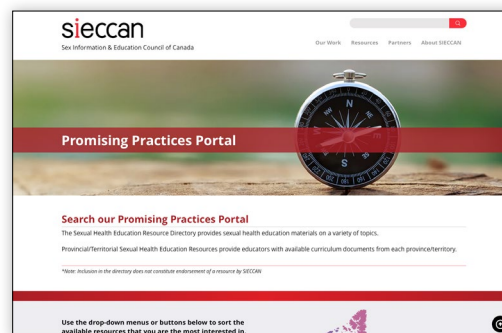
[Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Sexual Health Education](#)



[Benchmarks for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Sexual Health Education](#)



[GBV Prevention Portal](#)
Comprises of GBV prevention resources such as curriculum, guidelines, guides, lesson plans, and activities.



[SIECCAN's Sexual Health Education Promising Portal](#)



