



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 7 to 8
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Duration:	1-2 hours

That's Not Cool: Healthy and Respectful Relationships Online



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

Overview

In this lesson, students begin by considering one of five scenarios that illustrate unhealthy relationship behaviours relating to digital media: pressuring others to share private content, cyberstalking, harassment and abuse of trust. Students then relate the scenarios to their own experience by brainstorming other examples of these behaviours and voting on which they feel are most relevant to their lives. The teacher then leads a guided discussion on the reasons why unhealthy behaviours may be more common when we communicate through digital media and ways in which they can be avoided or mitigated. Finally, students act out their own scenario in which they portray young people successfully dealing with one of the unhealthy relationship behaviours.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Learn how to recognize healthy and unhealthy elements of relationships
- Consider aspects of digital communication that may lead to unhealthy relationships
- Reflect on the role of digital relationships in their lives
- Learn strategies for dealing with unhealthy online and offline relationships
- Create a media product

Preparation and Materials

- Read and photocopy the five *What's Wrong With This Picture?* handouts (each student should receive one of the five handouts)
- Photocopy the handout *That's Not Cool*
- Have craft paper, markers and stickers or sticky notes available



Procedure

What's Wrong With This Picture?

Begin by distributing the five *What's Wrong With This Picture?* handouts so that each of the students get *one* of the five. Have students read the scenarios and answer the questions on the handout.

Now take up the questions for the five scenarios with the class, making sure the following issues are identified:

- Scenario One: Pressuring or coercing someone to share something they don't want to
- Scenario Two: Cyberstalking (following people around online and offline and constantly contacting them)
- Scenario Three: Controlling (using digital devices to keep tabs on someone all the time)
- Scenario Four: Harassing someone online
- Scenario Five: Abusing someone's trust/threatening to publish private information

(Those particular terms don't have to be used, so long as students understand the key issues in each one.)

Beyond the factual questions, don't identify particular answers as correct: it is fine for students to have different interpretations.

Unhealthy Relationships

Now break the class into five groups, based on which handout they received. Have each group brainstorm other examples of that issue (general behaviours, not specific anecdotes) and write them on a sheet of paper.

Then have the groups rotate to another group's paper and add any examples of that behaviour that earlier groups missed and "vote" for the examples they think are most important or relevant to their lives by adding a sticker to that example (give students a limited number of stickers so they will cast their "votes" thoughtfully).

When each group has rotated to each paper, identify the issues and examples that received the most "votes." Distribute the handout *That's Not Cool* and go through the *Types of Unhealthy Online Relationships* and *Facts About Unhealthy Online Relationships* sections with the class, connecting the content to the scenarios they read and the lists made by the class.

Knowing Ourselves

Now ask students: Why do we sometimes do things we know are wrong? Make sure two points emerge:

1. **"Hot" emotions** like anger, fear, excitement, frustration and jealousy can be hard to control and can make us do things we normally wouldn't. Lead a short class discussion on the following points:
 - Do we always know when we're feeling these hot emotions? What might be some times when we're feeling them without realizing it? (For example, if we get scared, that fear doesn't stop right away even when the thing we were scared of does – or even if it turns out that it wasn't really scary.)
 - How do we feel when we're happy or excited? What are the ways our body shows that we're feeling a hot emotion? (Your heart beats faster; your muscles may feel tense; you may shiver; you may hold your breath without realizing it.)



- How does being in a “hot” emotional state affect how we think and make decisions? (It’s hard to think clearly when we’re feeling a hot emotion. Hot emotions make it harder to slow ourselves down: when something triggers a hot emotion, we usually want to do something about it *right away*. We also often take things a lot more personally when we’re feeling hot emotions, so we may react more strongly to things – which can make what we’re feeling even stronger.)
2. When we’re using digital media like computers or cell phones, we sometimes don’t feel **empathy** as much as we normally would. That’s because we don’t get a lot of the things that tell us how people are feeling.
- Ask students to remember a time they knew that a friend was mad and think about *how* they knew that: the look on their face; the tone of their voice; if they seem to be preoccupied with something.
 - What are some things that might happen if we don’t realize that we are, or someone we’re with is, in a hot emotional state? (We can do things without thinking about them; react differently to things than we otherwise would; provoke a reaction in someone that they otherwise wouldn’t have.)

Have students turn to the *What to Do If You’re In An Unhealthy Relationship* and *What Friends and Bystanders Can Do* sections of the *That’s Not Cool* handout and go through it with the class. Connect the strategies and tips there to students’ answers to the questions in the *What’s Wrong With This Picture?* scenarios. Which student answers are supported by the tips here? Which ones would they like to change based on what they know now?

Assessment/Evaluation: Correcting the Picture

Put students in small groups (four-five) and have them pick one of the examples from the lists they made and create a skit or video that shows people successfully dealing with it.

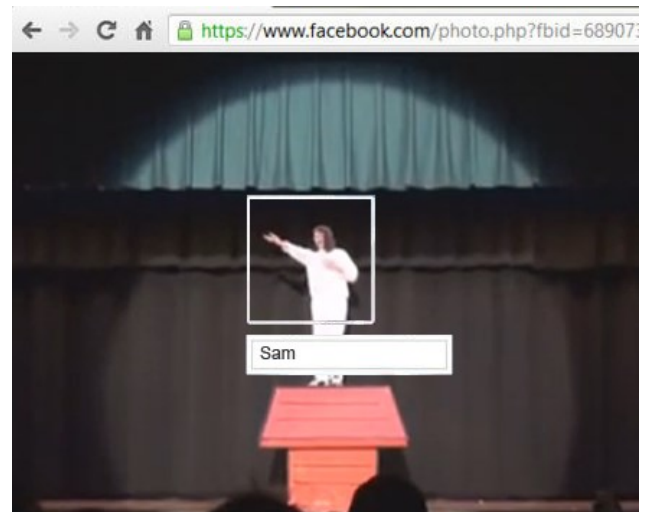


What's Wrong With This Picture?

Scenario One

Sam loves music and has been playing guitar since he was eight. For the last three years he's gone to an arts camp every summer, where the campers do different arts and stage a musical together: this year they did *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, and Sam played Snoopy the dog. When Sam started at a new school in the fall he met some other students who also play guitar and other instruments, and they decided to start a band. He still keeps in touch with the people he knows from art camp on Snapchat but he doesn't see them often offline.

Now Aidan, one of his friends from camp, has messaged Sam asking him to send pictures of their last big musical. (Aidan's own pictures got accidentally deleted.) Sam isn't sure he wants to share the pictures, because he's in all of them and he's afraid his new friends in the band will make fun of him if they see him in the Snoopy costume. At first Sam just doesn't answer Aidan but Aidan keeps asking, so Sam finally says he doesn't want to give him the photos. Aidan gets upset and says that if he were a real friend he would share the photos. Sam finally gives in and sends Aidan the photos, but makes him promise not to post or tag him in them. Aidan agrees, but when Sam checks on the camp's Facebook group he sees the photos have been posted there.



Questions

1. What did Aidan do to Sam that was wrong?
2. What made it wrong?
3. Why do you think Aidan thought it was okay?
4. How do you think it made Sam feel?
5. What bad things might happen because of what Aidan did?
6. What do you think Aidan should have done instead?
7. What could or would you have done if you knew this was happening?



What's Wrong With This Picture?

Scenario Two

Amy just started at a new school and her teacher asked Sangita, another student in the same class, to be her “buddy” to help Amy fit in. Sangita shows her around the school and also follows her on Instagram, to help her get connected to the rest of their classmates. Amy ‘Likes’ and comments on a lot of Sangita’s posts. At first Sangita enjoys getting the attention but when Amy goes through all her old posts and Likes every photo, she starts to set her privacy settings so that Amy can’t see them.

A few days later Sangita notices that Amy has joined a Discord server she uses to talk to her gaming friends, and realizes that Amy must have Googled her name to find her there. She talks to Amy at school and asks her to stop “following” her online. Amy says that she knows Sangita has been hiding her posts and that she’s going to tell all their friends how rude she’s been.



Questions

1. What did Amy do to Sangita that was wrong?
2. What made it wrong?
3. Why do you think Amy thought it was okay?
4. How do you think it made Sangita feel?
5. What bad things might happen because of what Amy did?
6. What do you think Amy should have done instead?
7. What could or would you have done if you knew this was happening?



What's Wrong With This Picture?

Scenario Three

Teresa and Michael have been dating for two weeks. Because they live in different parts of town, they don't see each other very much outside of school. Teresa asks Michael to send her a text or message as often as he can, to help her keep from missing him. At first he doesn't mind doing it, because it makes him feel like he's important to her, but sometimes if he forgets to send her something or can't do it she starts sending him texts asking him where he is and why he hasn't texted her.

One time when Michael isn't able to "check in" with Teresa she sends a text to him asking if the reason he hasn't contacted her is because he's with another girl. He says that he isn't and that sometimes he just doesn't have time to text her back. She suggests that he turn on the GPS on his phone so that she can make sure that he's at home and not somewhere else without him having to text her. He's tired of having to text her all the time so he agrees.

A few days later, Michael sees a photo posted that someone took of him doing a scene in his drama class and Likes it. Teresa leaves an angry comment on the photo asking if he liked it because he's seeing the girl who was in the scene with him. He promises that he isn't and she makes him agree to unfriend her.



Questions

1. What did Teresa do to Michael that was wrong?
2. What made it wrong?
3. Why do you think Teresa thought it was okay?
4. How do you think it made Michael feel?
5. What bad things might happen because of what Teresa did?
6. What do you think Teresa should have done instead?
7. What could or would you have done if you knew this was happening?



What's Wrong With This Picture?

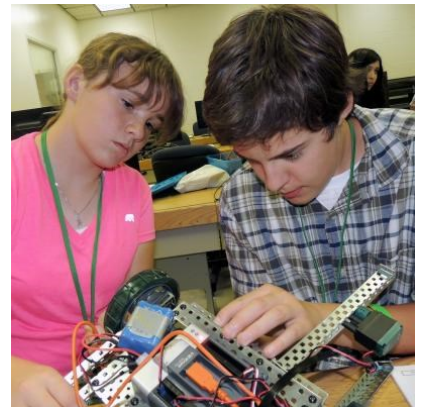
Scenario Four

Sonia has always liked building things and playing with machines, so she's very excited to join her school's Robotics club. At first she doesn't really notice that she's the only girl on the team because none of the boys seem to care about it: she's known a lot of them since she was little. But things start to change when she wins one of the four spots on the school's Robotics Challenge team: when the team loses a competition with another school Eli, a club member who didn't make the team, posts a message on the team's discussion board saying that they lost because of her. Nobody responds to the post, and the next day it's been deleted.

A few days later, Sonia sits down at her usual computer and finds that someone has already logged into her account. For a minute she wonders if she might have left it logged in the last time she was there, but then she notices there's a word processing document open that says she's ruining the team and should quit it. She deletes the document and finds out that all of the programming she's done for the team has been erased from the hard drive. Sonia asks Eli if he did it and he says that if she can't keep him from hacking her account she shouldn't be on the team.

Questions

1. What did Eli do to Sonia that was wrong?
2. What made it wrong?
3. Why do you think Eli thought it was okay?
4. How do you think it made Sonia feel?
5. What bad things might happen because of what Eli did?
6. What do you think Eli should have done instead?
7. What could or would you have done if you knew this was happening?

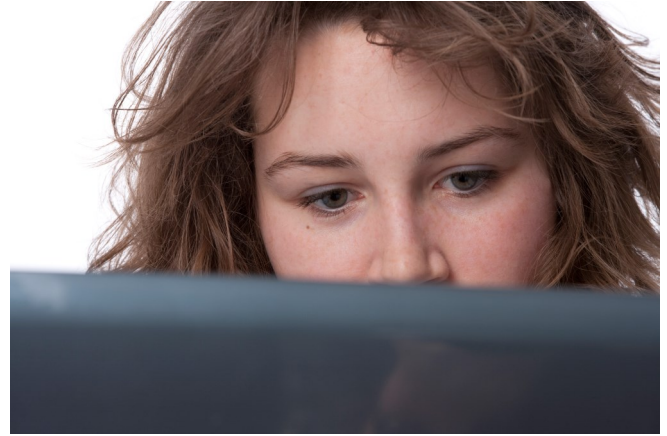


What's Wrong With This Picture?

Scenario Five

Stuart and Nicole have been dating for three months. One of the things Nicole likes best about Stuart is that he's a good listener: she calls, texts and messages him every night, telling him about everything that worries or upsets her. Sometimes she tells him about things her friends and family have done that annoy her; she would never say these things to them, but it makes her feel better to tell him.

When Nicole gets a chance to go on a student exchange to France, Stuart is upset. She promises to keep in contact with him but he doesn't want her to go. When she says that she is going anyway, he says that if she does he will post all of her texts and messages to him online, including ones where she complained about her friends and family, and make sure that everyone she knows sees them.



Questions

1. What did Stuart do to Nicole that was wrong?
2. What made it wrong?
3. Why do you think Stuart thought it was okay?
4. How do you think it made Nicole feel?
5. What bad things might happen because of what Stuart did?
6. What do you think Stuart should have done instead?
7. What could or would you have done if you knew this was happening?



That's Not Cool

For most of us, digital devices like cell phones, tablets and computers are a big part of how we keep in touch with our friends and families. It's important to know that some relationships we may have online aren't good for us.

Types of Unhealthy Online Relationships

There are two main kinds of unhealthy relationships: those that are *abusive* and those that are *exploitative*.

Abuse: Relationship abuse is when someone hurts, insults or scares someone they're close to, tries to control what they do, pressures them to do things they don't want to do or tries to keep them away from their friends and family.

Here are some of the ways that relationship abuse can happen online:

- harassing someone with unwanted texts, photos, videos other messages
- using digital media to send threats
- "stalking" someone online
- constantly keeping tabs on what someone is doing online
- expecting someone to "check in" all the time by text, GPS, etc.
- making someone "unfriend" other people
- pressuring someone to share things they don't want to share
- spreading lies or rumours about someone
- sharing personal or embarrassing things, like photos
- spying on someone's calls or posts
- threatening to do any of the above

Exploitation: Some people use digital media to get teenage girls or boys involved in relationships they're not ready for. They do this by targeting girls and boys they think are vulnerable. When they find a target they shower them with attention, sympathy, affection and kindness, to persuade them that they love and understand them.

Facts About Unhealthy Online Relationships

It's not just romantic relationships that can be unhealthy. We can have unhealthy relationships with friends, siblings, classmates and other people we spend time with.

Boys can be victims of abusive online relationships as well as girls.

Sometimes both people in a relationship do things that are abusive. Just because an abusive relationship goes both ways doesn't mean you're not a victim – and being a victim doesn't make it okay to abuse somebody else.

Most of the time, people who exploit teens online don't pretend to be anyone they're not, and they don't hide what they're doing. They target mostly girls in their early teens, as well as boys who are, or think they may be gay or bisexual.



When we're mad at a friend or a partner, it's normal to want to get back at them – but that's exactly when you have to keep control. If you're feeling angry, scared or nervous, get offline for a while and wait to cool down before you do anything that you might regret.

What to Do If You're in an Unhealthy Relationship

If you're in an abusive relationship, get help.

- Talk to friends, parents, teachers, or other adults you trust. If someone has threatened you physically, either online or offline, you should contact the police.
- If you're being abusive to someone, you can get help too. A lot of people who abuse others can learn ways to control their anger and have healthier relationships.
- If there's nobody you can or want to talk to in person, you can call a helpline like Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868) or visit their website (<http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/>).
- Don't make excuses for an abusive person because he or she "isn't like that all the time."
- Don't make excuses for things you or someone else does because "it only happens sometimes" or because "everybody does it." Just because "everybody does" something doesn't mean it's not abuse.
- Don't blame yourself for things that you may have done, like giving someone your password or letting them have access to embarrassing photos of you. **Nothing you can do** gives someone the right to abuse you.
- A lot of boys say they feel pressured by their friends to do things that are abusive, like sharing sexual photos their girlfriends sent them. It can be hard to stand up to this pressure, but you have to think about how much giving in could hurt you and your partner.

What Friends and Bystanders Can Do

Friends and bystanders can be really important in helping to keep people out of an unhealthy relationship or helping them get out of one. Here are some things you can do:

- If you think a friend is getting involved in an unhealthy relationship – as a victim, an abuser, or both – talk to them about it. If that doesn't help, you can talk to their parents, a teacher or another adult you trust.
- Don't be part of the abuse by forwarding or sharing any embarrassing or sexual material that's being spread around.
- Call people out when they say or do things that make it seem like relationship abuse is okay or like someone may have "deserved" to be a victim. Sending someone a private photo does **not** mean it's okay to share or spread it.



Assessment Task: Skit/Video

	<i>Learning Expectations</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
Use Skills and competencies that fall under “use” range from basic technical know-how – using computer programs such as word processors, web browsers, email, and other communication tools – to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources, such as search engines and online databases, and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.	demonstrate awareness of the benefits of online communication and able to handle situations of online behaviour that may make him or her uncomfortable demonstrate strategies for the management of a range of feelings and emotions demonstrate a knowledge of the appropriate strategies for sharing and expressing feelings and emotions apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products or processes using digital technology communicate ideas and information in a variety of oral, print and other media texts, such as short reports, talks and posters create original digital works as a means of personal or group expression	Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)
Understand Understand includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us. Understand also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.	identify characteristics of healthy relationships and unhealthy relationships understand the role of the media in establishing feelings and attitudes about ourselves and relationships with others	Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)



	<i>Learning Expectations</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
Engage Engage is the ability to make and use digital and other media to express yourself and participate in online and offline communities. The ability to engage using digital media ensures that Canadians are active contributors to digital society.	<p>use own experiences as a basis for exploring and expressing opinions and learning</p> <p>identify an appropriate form to suit the purpose and audience for a media text they plan to create</p> <p>demonstrate understanding that presenting themselves in different ways online carries both benefits and risks</p> <p>demonstrate understanding of the social nature of digital media and technologies</p>	Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)

