Lesson 11 (Extension or Alternative): Rules, Roles, & Relationships

OBJECTIVES
1. Students will examine their own beliefs about gender-role stereotypes.
2. Students will identify what beliefs about gender and gender-role stereotypes can affect teen relationships.
3. Students will explore the process of addressing gender issues and stereotypes in relationships – and how this process can help make relationships stronger and healthier.

AGENDA
5 minutes  Do Now
10 minutes Gender Role Impacts
10 minutes Gender Issues & Stereotypes in Relationships
25 minutes Rules, Roles and Relationships Activity
Homework  Media, Gender, & Relationships

MATERIALS
• Relationship Issues & Values (cut into strips)
• Worksheet: Rules, Roles, & Relationships
• Homework: Media, Gender, & Relationships

CALIFORNIA HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARDS
1.3.G Discuss the characteristics of healthy relationships, dating, committed relationships, and marriage.
4.1.G Analyze how interpersonal communication affects relationships.
5.3.G Use a decision-making process to analyze when it is necessary to seek help with or leave an unhealthy situation.
8.1.G Encourage and support safe, respectful, and responsible relationships.
DO NOW 5 minutes

Materials
- Every student needs a notebook, journal, or paper and pen
- Flipchart or whiteboard and markers

Activity
Write on board and have students complete the following question:

Where do people learn about how to start and maintain a healthy relationship?
Who are relationship role models for teens? Are these relationships mostly healthy or unhealthy?

If there is time, ask a few students to share their answers with the class.

GENDER ROLE IMPACTS 10 minutes

Materials
- Flipchart or whiteboard and markers

Activity
Explain that this activity will involve learning about relationships and values as they relate to some of the issues in Straightlaced. Students will have an opportunity to think about how gender issues and stereotypes affect romantic relationships and why two people who are in a relationship should discuss these topics.

Ask students to recall some of the gender-role expectations and stereotypes from the film, or have them draw upon their own experiences to generate a list. Write students' ideas on the board or a large sheet of paper.

Once you have reviewed the issues, pose the following questions:

- What impact do you think these issues have on how teens think about relationships?
- What impact do you think they have on how teens behave in relationships?
- What impact do you think they have on how teens in relationships make decisions together?

Teacher Tip:
If you have the gender boxes from lesson #3, you can use these to remind students about the gender-role stereotypes they previously discussed.
For example, how can the stereotype that guys are not supposed to show emotion affect their relationships? What about the pressure for girls to be traditionally beautiful? What about the fear of being labeled “gay” or “lesbian”?

**Teacher Tip:**
When talking about teen relationships, please make sure students are considering all types of relationships—heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, monogamous, open relationships, etc.

## GENDER ISSUES & STEREOTYPES IN RELATIONSHIPS

### Materials
- OPTIONAL: Quotes projected or written on the board.

### Activity
Explain that this activity will allow students to compare the thoughts and values of two people in a hypothetical couple and make a recommendation to them about how and when they should communicate about gender issues and stereotypes.

Walk the group through the following example:

Imagine that there are two people who really like each other, but that they hold different views on the following issue. Here are two quotes from the film, Straightlaced.

**Girl says:** “Some guys say that I talk too much and that I have an opinion about everything. They’re like, oh you know, you should just sit there. You’re pretty, but you’re always telling me all these things, using big words. And I’m like, well, that’s how I am, what do you want me to do about it?”

**Guy says:** “If I go with a girl smarter than me, I won’t feel comfortable. I don’t know, ’cause probably each time I talk, she’s going to like, outsmart me and stuff. Like, if I’m in front of my friends and she’s smarter than me, they’re going to start saying stuff about it, like, ooh, why is she smarter than you, and sooner or later she’s going to play you out and stuff.”

- What beliefs do these two teens feel differently about? (Answers may include: how smart girls should be, whether boys need to be more intelligent than their girlfriends, how freely girls should be able to express their ideas and opinions, etc.)
- How might these issues or stereotypes affect their relationship? (Answers may include: the girl might get put down for expressing her ideas, the guy might be so worried about not “measuring up” that he would try to dominate most of their intellectual conversations, the girl could become alienated from school or limit her aspirations for college or career to please her boyfriend, etc.)

*Be Real. Be Ready.*
• If these were your friends, what would you recommend they talk about or do to try to have a healthy relationship, given their different beliefs? (Answers may include: talk about the stereotype that girls aren’t supposed to be too smart, find a way to explicitly value both people’s intelligence, reassure the guy that the girl will not “play him out” or otherwise make him look bad.)

Teacher tip
Take the time to generate a few in-depth responses to these questions as a group; these will serve as models for students as they do their own independent work later in the activity.

RULES, ROLES & RELATIONSHIPS
25 minutes

Materials
• Relationship Issues & Values (cut into strips)
• Worksheet: Rules, Roles, & Relationships

Activity
Before beginning this activity, review the instructions, look over the Relationship Issues and Values sheets and select 2–4 topics (statement pairs) that you would like the group to focus on. Decide whether you will have students work in pairs or small groups; then copy and cut enough strips for your chosen topic areas so that each pair or group will have both of the lettered statements they need to complete the activity.

Distribute the Relationship Issues and Values strips. If the students will be working in small groups, each group should get one set of statements with the same letter (for example, both of the “A” quotes). If they will be working in pairs, each pair should get one set of statements. Depending on the size of the group and how many issues you have chosen, it is likely that more than one pair (or even more than one small group) will be working on the same quotes.

Explain that each strip of paper has an attitude or value from the movie Straightlaced. The attitude on these strips may or may not be something that the students themselves personally agree with, but they should pretend that each belief is held by one of the two people in their hypothetical relationship.

Pass out the Rules, Roles and Relationships worksheet so each student has one. Have students read what is on their strips of paper to their partner or group and imagine that there is an actual couple who holds these differing ideas. Once the values have been shared, each pair or group should complete the worksheet. Questions here are similar to those in the example discussion.
Give students approximately 10 minutes to complete the worksheet.

Bring the group back together and discuss the beliefs of the hypothetical couples and the answers on students’ worksheets. This is also a good time to ask how the issues and conflicts people have identified connect with their own lives.

Close the activity by discussing the following overall questions:

- What did you notice about the beliefs that the hypothetical couples held?
- Have you seen issues like this play out in your own relationships or those of your family or friends?
- What other issues related to gender roles and sexuality might couples need to discuss?
- Given your discussions, what do you think are some key elements of healthy relationships?
- What is one take-away message that you got from today’s lesson?

**Teacher Tip:**
One common response that students may have to the differences or potential tensions between members of their hypothetical couple is to say they should “just break up.” While, in some cases, ending a relationship may indeed be the best option for that person or couple to do in response to a conflict over values, it is important for that not to be the only option explored in this exercise. What else could the hypothetical couple do that would help them work through their differences of opinion? How can they build a healthy relationship, given that they don’t agree on some key gender issues?

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**Homework**

*Media, Gender, & Relationships*
Worksheet: Rules, Roles, & Relationships

Name: ________________________________________________

Period: ______________________ Date: ____________________

Directions: Imagine that there are two people who really like each other but seem to hold different attitudes or values about one or more gender-related issues or stereotypes. Working with your partner, use the beliefs written on your strips of paper to complete the worksheet below. Make sure to take the beliefs of both people into account when answering the following questions. Be thoughtful and specific so that this imaginary couple could take your advice in order to have a healthy relationship.

1. The issue(s) or stereotype(s) that this couple has different beliefs about is(are):

__________________________________________________________________________________

2. One person believes that ________________________________

While the other person believes that ________________________________

3. The issue(s) or stereotype(s) might affect their relationship in the following ways:

a) _____________________________________________________________________________

b) _____________________________________________________________________________

c) _____________________________________________________________________________

4. If this couple were our friends, we would suggest they talk about the following topic(s):

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

5. Our advice for this couple in order to have a healthy relationship is:

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Be Real. Be Ready.
Homework: Media, Gender, & Relationships

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Period: __________________ Date: __________________

Directions: Watch a television show, read a short story, magazine, or comic, or think about a book you have read, or a movie you have seen that features teens in romantic relationships with each other. Think about that relationship and write your answers to the following questions.

Media Source: ____________________________
Relationship/the characters: ____________________________

1. What gender roles, issues, and/or stereotypes were present the relationship?

2. How did these roles, issues, and stereotypes affect the relationship?

3. How do you think the relationship shown in the media source (book/movie/show/comic) affects or influences the attitudes and actions of real-life teens?

Be Real. Be Ready.
Name:________________________________________________________________
Period:______________________   Date:_________________

**Directions:** Recall a time that you experienced a conflict (a difference of opinions, beliefs, or views) with someone. This could be with a partner, friend, family member, teacher, coach, or another relationship in your life. Answer the following questions to explain how you did or could work through the conflict.

1. What was the conflict? What did you think or believe, what did the other person think or believe, and why did this create conflict?

2. How did this make you feel? How do you think the other person felt?

3. What did you or could you say or do to resolve this conflict in a healthy manner?