

Unit 1: Healthy Relationships

Essential Question: How can you use critical and creative thinking skills to address problems in diverse family, community and work environments to appreciate human worth and promote success in family and work life?

Lesson Problem: How do you ensure you are in a healthy relationship?

National FCS Standards

(Refer to: <http://nasafacs.org/national-standards--competencies.html>)

Content: 13.0 Interpersonal Skills

Comprehensive Standard: 13.1 Analyze functions and expectations of various types of relationships.

Competencies:

13.1.1 Analyze processes for building and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

13.1.4 Analyze factors that contribute to healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Comprehensive Standard: 13.2 Analyze personal needs and characteristics and their effects on interpersonal relationships.

Competency: 13.2.1 Analyze the effects of personal characteristics on relationships

Comprehensive Standard: 13.3 Demonstrate communication skills that contribute to positive relationships.

Competencies:

13.3.3 Demonstrate effective listening and feedback techniques.

13.3.4 Analyze strategies to overcome communication barriers in family, community and work settings.

Comprehensive Standard: 13.4 Evaluate effective conflict prevention and management techniques.

Competencies:

13.4.3 Apply the roles of decision making and problem solving in reducing and managing conflict.

13.4.4 Demonstrate nonviolent strategies that address conflict.

Kansas Family and Consumer Science Competencies

Content: Family Studies (22208/22218)

Benchmark: 5.5 Analyze functions and expectations of various types of relationships.

Competencies:

5.5.1 Analyze processes for building and maintaining interpersonal relationships in families.

5.5.3 Evaluate processes for handling unhealthy relationships.

Benchmark: 5.6 Examine personal needs and characteristics and their effects on interpersonal relationships.

Competency:

5.6.1 Investigate the effects of personal characteristics and needs on family relationships.

Benchmark: 5.7 Demonstrate standards that guide behavior in interpersonal relationships

Competency:

5.7.2 Construct guidelines for assessing issues and situations involving relationships

Benchmark: 5.8 Evaluate effective conflict prevention and management techniques.

Competency:

5.8.3 Apply the roles of decision making and problem solving in reducing and/or managing conflict.

Content: Human Growth and Development (45004/45014)

Benchmark: 12.4 Analyze functions and expectations of various types of relationships.

Competency:

12.4.1 Analyze processes for building and maintaining interpersonal relationships across the lifespan.

Benchmark: 12.5 Examine personal needs and characteristics and their effects on interpersonal relationships.

Competencies:

12.5.1 Recognize personal needs over the lifespan (i.e. respect from others, independence, self-sufficiency, intellectual stimulation, value to society).

12.5.3 Investigate the effects of personal characteristics and needs on relationships throughout life.

Basic Skills (red font/highlight): **Language Arts**, Math, Science, **Social Studies**

21st Century Process Skills (red font/highlight):

- **Thinking & Problem Solving:** **Critical Thinking, Problem Solving** (Flexibility), Creativity (Innovation)
- **Information Literacy and Communication Skills:** **Communication** (Media Literacy, Technology)
- **Leadership and Collaboration:** Leadership (Initiative) , Management (Productivity), **Goal Setting , Decision Making**

Learning Objectives: The learner will:

- Analyze various types of relationships.
- Compare and contrast healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Demonstrate positive communication skills.
- Explain effective ways to manage conflict.

Vocabulary:

Healthy Relationship
Unhealthy Relationship
Communication
Conflict
Conflict Resolution

Instruction

Bell Work: (5 minutes)

(Post or project the following as students enter the classroom. Direct the answers to be hard copy or electronic.)

How do you know you are in a relationship?

What types of relationships are there?

How do you know if the relationship is working well? How do you know if it isn't?

Introduction (anticipatory set):

Teacher: What Makes a Relationship Healthy? (45 minutes)

To begin, I am going to share with you characteristics that are commonly linked with relationships. The question is what characteristics do YOU look for in a relationship?

A. Each of you has a worksheet 1.1 (“What Makes a Relationship Healthy?”) on which you are to list the common characteristics of relationships (one per line) as I read them to you. NOTE: Leave the right hand column blank at this time.

Relationship Characteristics:

1. Open and easy communication
2. Accept each other as they are
3. Look out for each other’s best interests
4. Mutual trust
5. Mutual respect
6. Similar values
7. Similar goals
8. Have fun together
9. Physical affection
10. Can work out problems and conflicts respectfully
11. Can give each other space
12. Commitment & Faithfulness

B. Ask the class if any characteristics are missing. Add to the list (several rows have been left open for your additions). You may want to discuss and obtain class consensus before adding them. You might also have to describe each characteristic if the students are not familiar with what they mean.

C. After all characteristics are listed, direct the students to rank them, where #1 is the most important and so on.

(Optional activity: Gather the rankings and locate the class averages to determine class most important characteristics. This could be used for reference later in the unit.)

D. Debriefing Questions:

- Why are these characteristics important to consider when in a relationship?
- Why did you rank them the way you did?
- Why do you think others in the class rank them similarly (or differently) than you?

Learning Process (with Activities):

I. Teacher: Relationships 101—Relationships Now (15 minutes)

A. There are many types of relationships. They include family relationships with parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and siblings, those with friends and classmates, those with employers and co-workers and even those you have with people you barely know.

In all situations, relationships require commitment and faithfulness, but to differing levels. Let's explore each type of relationship: *(Teacher Note: Refer to classroom textbook for information.)*

- Family relationships
- Friends
- Employers/co-workers
- Acquaintances

Activity #1: What's in a Healthy Relationship? (20-25 min)

Relationship experts have identified all the characteristics in the introduction as important to relationships, but two are very important if the relationship is to be long-term. They are:

- Commitment
- Faithfulness

Divide the class into groups of two, assign them to:

- Research and define each term.
- Compare and contrast the two terms as they relate to relationships.
- Share findings with the class.

Allow 15-20 minutes for work.

II. Teacher: Relationships 101—Future Relationships (10 minutes)

A. There is one type of relationship that was not listed. That is the relationship you will form when and if you decide to identify a life partner. In this case, we are looking at marriage relationships. All the characteristics listed are just a important, if not more so, especially when one looks at the addition of romantic love to the relationship.

Commitment and faithfulness in a long-term marriage relationship is similar to other relationships, but it does have unique considerations. Many examples of unfaithfulness and lack of commitment can be found in the news, on TV and in the movies. But for a long-term relationship to stay long-term, it takes two things...commitment and faithfulness.

Commitment refers to developing a trust and respect for one another. It's being there for another person despite personal costs event if you don't feel like it or it is difficult to do. It's placing the relationship as a priority in your life. It's working daily, weekly and yearly to maintain and strengthen the relationship. If one is committed, the others feelings are considered in decisions and actions. (Synonyms: promise, pledge, vow, assurance, responsibility, duty, guarantee)

Faithfulness refers to talking and believing positively in the other as well as ensuring actions align with these factors. It's the personal resolve to remain firmly devoted to another person. It's being reliable and steadfast in encouraging the other person to become the best he/she can be. In some cases, this is easy to accomplish and in others, it will take work. And there will be some times in a long-term relationship when it is easier to achieve. It also takes both parties to make it work. (Synonyms: unwavering, persistent, dedicated, trustworthy, dependable, loyal)

B. Debriefing Questions:

- How is commitment the same for all of these relationships?
- How is faithfulness the same for all of these relationships?
- How did the Activity 1.1.class summaries align with the definitions provided?
- Is there any form of relationship missing?

Activity#2: Relationships in the Movies (60-90 minutes)

(Teaching Note: If a pre-recorded program or movie is to be used, do so prior to the class. Follow all copyright laws. Know your school policy on showing movies in class.)

Direct students to locate examples of long-term relationships found in today's media such as in a marriage. It could be a TV staged program, movie or reality show of current times or in the past. It could also be historical and factual or fiction. *(Optional variation: Have programming pre-recorded and show in class, looking for the same things.)*

While watching the program, look for examples of characteristics in action, using the list from the introduction. They might be positive or negative examples.

Discuss their findings by listing on a marker board or within a power point slide.
(Teacher note: Once completed, four that will probably come to the surface are commitment, faithfulness, communication and conflict resolution.)

III: Teacher: Building Communication Skills (15 - 20 minutes)

A. Marriage and family therapists tell us that many marriages and committed relationships break up because couples don't know how to communicate effectively and don't know how to manage conflict. The good news is that communication and conflict resolution are skills that can be learned and practiced. By working together, a couple can learn the skills to build and maintain a healthy relationship. You don't need to be in a romantic relationship to work on your communication or conflict resolution skills. Being able to communicate and work out conflicts respectfully will help you at home, with friends, at school and on the job.

B. We communicate in many ways. What are they? (verbal, non-verbal, written/print, vocal, listen) Communication involves a sender, a receiver and the message. How the message is interpreted is influenced by a lot of things including:

- the words spoken,
- how they are said (the emotion),
- the non-verbal cues as they are being said (body language, eye contact),
- the interpretation of the message by the receiver and
- the response of the receiver.

C. Social media has had a huge impact on how we communicate. There are millions of Facebook accounts, twitters sent and blog postings every day. In fact how many of you have these accounts?

Using the five influencers, what are the positives of social media? *(Students may have answers related to immediate communication, easy to find people you know, response can be quick, social media sites gather personal information making it more public than maybe the sender wants).*

What are the challenges of using social media for communication? *(Students may have answers related to messages sent when emotions are high, those who haven't had the chance to think before answering/posting, decreased personal contact so communication skills are weak, can't see non-verbal cues.)*

Our world involves and will continue to involve communication modes that will have technological advances in social media and personal communication. We only had face-to-face communication for years. Then things were drawn on cave walls and written on scrolls that were passed down. We then had the telegraph and written letters followed by the corded telephone. Now we have cell phones and the internet, skype and web-connections. This will always involve the same three things however...a sender, a receiver and a message.

Activity#3: A Communication Exercise (20 min)

(Teacher note: See "Teacher Resource #1.2 for A Communication Exercise" for additional comments.)

This simple communication exercise can enhance communication within a long-term relationship. Practice role playing this exercise with a friend so you'll remember how to do it, then try using this

technique the next time you are discussing something important with someone in your life. You will be receiving participation points and only serious comments and role playing will earn them.

Ask the class “What are some common topics students talk about in a day?” (*List topics on marker board or within a power point slide. These will be the issues the class will practice discussing as they use communication skills below.*)

Directions:

1. Find a partner and assume partner A or partner B roles.
2. Partner A makes a statement (what s/he thinks, what s/he feels, what s/he wants, etc.) about one of the topics from the list.
(Pointers: Keep it short. Speak for yourself only - don't assume you know what the other person thinks or feels.)
3. Partner B listens carefully to partner A *(Pointers: Don't interrupt. Focus on your partner's message.)*
4. Partner B repeats back to partner A what they heard and asks if what they heard was correct.
(Pointers: Stick to what you heard. Wait for your turn to give your point of view.)
5. Partner A either confirms or corrects as Partner B listens
6. Repeat once.
7. Switch roles.

Debriefing Questions:

- How awkward did you feel when you first did this exercise?
- Did it get better with practice?
- What if one partner does not want to talk about it or becomes emotional?

(Teacher Note: Could move to more complex topics such as issues related to the television or movie relationships in a previous activity.)

IV. Teacher: Guidelines for Managing Conflict (Handout 1.3) (20-30 minutes)

Have students read through the handout on Guidelines for Managing conflict. Have them role play effectively managing conflict using same techniques as learned in the communication exercise.

(Optional Activity: As a class, develop a conflict rubric from the information shared and then use it to analyze how others work through conflict by watching a recorded TV show.)

V. Teacher: The Role of Dating (20 minutes)

So, why date? What is the role of dating? No, it's not “trying on someone”, but as a method of learning what you want in a long-term partner. It helps you learn how to connect to someone, be committed and faithful and practice all the other characteristics we've talked about. It will help you find that someone that works for you and your life as well as those who will not. It is not uncommon to involve yourself with someone who appears to be one thing, but in actuality is someone else. Unfortunately, abuse can happen, especially if a person does not note the early warning signs and leave before it becomes more serious. We will not be discussing abuse or relationship violence until the next unit, so for now we'll focus on healthy relationships....what we should all try for.

Hand out and discuss “Characteristics of Healthy Dating Relationships” (Handout 1.4) Put aside for now.

Activity#4: Ways to Create Healthy Relationships (45 minutes)

(Teacher note: You'll need newsprint, colored markers, masking tape and handout)

“Being in a healthy relationship is influenced by you. Let's see how.”

Directions:

1. Divide students in groups of 3 or 4.
2. Have each team brainstorm ways to create healthy relationships, writing their ideas on newsprint.
3. Have each group post their list on the wall and have the whole group do a wall walk to note the lists.
4. Hand out “10 Ways to Create Healthy Relationships” (Handout 1.5). Allow teams to read the handout.
5. Discuss similarities and differences between the lists they produced and the handout reference. Allowing students to add or remove items from their lists.

Activity#5: Interview Married Couples (Assign as homework—Allow 1-2 class periods)

(Optional Activity: Arrange for a panel of newly married and long-term marriages you know are healthy.)

Directions:

1. Have each student interview two married couples they know. One who has been married less than 5 years and the one they know they can interview who has been married longer.
2. Give them the “Healthy Relationships Interview” (Worksheet 1.6) questions to complete.
3. Discuss what they learned once completed.

Conclusion: Bringing It All Together (45 minutes)

A. Healthy Dating and Healthy Marriage Comparison and Contrast

Refer to “Characteristics of Healthy Dating Relationships” (Hand out 1.4 from before) and “Characteristics of Healthy Marriages” (Handout 1.7). Assign students to compare and contrast characteristics for dating and marriage, noting similarities and differences using the method you select.

B. Handout the “Important Relationship Pointers” (Handout 1.8) for the students for future reference.

(Optional: Make information into a smaller flyer they can put in their wallets or purses.)

C. Allow the class to summarize what they have learned, which may include the following:

- * In order to have a healthy relationship, it’s important to live and take care of yourself before and while you’re in the relationship.
- * Healthy relationships increase your energy for the other things in your life. The relationship inspires you rather than drains you.
- * A caring boyfriend/girlfriend (long-term partner/spouse) will motivate and support you rather than confine or control you.
- * It is never a good idea to completely wrap yourself up in someone to the exclusion of your family and friends.
- * No relationship is perfect. There will be good times and difficulties in any relationship.
- * Relationships that have a lot of conflict or abuse of any type (verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual) are not healthy.
- * If a little voice inside you is saying that something’s not right in the relationship, listen!
- * Talk with someone you trust, other than your boyfriend/girlfriend, about concerns you have about the health of your relationship. This could be a parent, clergy, counselor or another adult.
- * If several other people are telling you the relationship is not right, listen to them.

Debriefing Questions:

Technical:

- What are three important relationship skills?
- What are characteristics of an unhealthy relationship?
- What does communication mean?
- What does conflict resolution mean?

Interpretation:

- How does conflict affect a relationship?
- Why is good communication a necessity in healthy relationships?
- How can you know if your relationship is a healthy relationship?
- Why is commitment necessary for a healthy marriage?
- What do you think is the most important ingredient in a healthy marriage?

Reflective:

- What communication skills do you need to develop to promote healthy relationships?
- What are some things you can do to develop better conflict resolution skills?

Assessment:

Married Couple Interview

Participation in Role Plays

Practicing communication skills in class.

Reflection Essay (Use local school literacy rubric for evaluating written documents.)

FCCLA Competitive Events

Teaching Resources:

- For additional resources on healthy marriage, including information on counseling, premarital education, and where to go for help, visit the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center online at: www.healthymarriageinfo.org © 2008 - 2013 National Healthy Marriage Resource Center
- <http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/resource-detail/index.aspx?rid=3653> © 2008 - 2013 National Healthy Marriage Resource Center - Information especially for teens
- Love u 2: Relationship Smarts Plus - Instructor's manual - May be purchased at the following link <http://www.dibbleinstitute.org/love-u2-relationship-smarts-plus-new/> Copyright © 2013 The Dibble Institute.
- **Stronger Marriages.org** - great website for research based articles on healthy relationships. <http://strongermarriage.org/htm/dating>
- **Relationship Reality (The Dibble Institute and The National Campaign)** - www.RelationshipReality.net © 2013, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
- **Love is Respect** <http://www.loveisrespect.org/> (good site about preventing abuse in relationships) Copyright © 2007-2013 loveisrespect.org
- **Two of Us (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center)** - www.TwoofUs.org © 2008 - 2013 National Healthy Marriage Resource Center

Materials:

-Newsprint

-Colored Markers

-Masking tape

- LCD Projector
- DVD Player (or online movie resource)

Handouts/Worksheets/References:

- 1.1—What Makes a Relationship Healthy?
- 1.2—A Communication Exercise
- 1.3—Guidelines for Managing Conflict
- 1.4—Characteristics of Healthy Dating Relationships
- 1.5—10 Ways to Create Healthy Relationships
- 1.6—Unit 1: Healthy Relationships Interviews Assignment
- 1.7—Characteristics of Healthy Marriages
- 1.8—Important Relationship Pointers

FCCLA Integration: (www.fcclainc.org *Affiliated chapter is required to use these materials.*)

Families First National Program Lessons and Power point

Power of One—A Better You; Family Ties

STAR Event:

- National Programs in Action
- Interpersonal Communication
- Applied Technology

Optional/Additional Learning Activities/Follow Up:

- Optional activities have been provided throughout this unit.
- At the conclusion of the unit, have the class, develop a relationship rubric from the information shared and then use it to analyze how others work through conflict by watching a recorded TV show or classroom appropriate movie. Ensure copy right laws are followed.
- Teacher Note: A good placement for this section would be before Preventing Relationship Violence.
- Teacher Note: A power point may be appropriate due to the contents of this unit. One was not created for this resource at this time to allow for individual teacher flexibility.

A Communication Exercise

Practicing communicate techniques through role playing is the best way to encourage positive communication techniques when actually dealing with an issue. It will be beneficial to practice as both partner A and partner B in positive and negative situations. *(Note: Participation points will likely decrease the “goofing off” of answers.)*

A power point slide or listing on a marker board may be best for reference as the role playing is practiced.

Follow these directions: (as listed in the unit plan)

1. Partner A makes a statement (what s/he thinks, what s/he feels, what s/he wants, etc.).
Pointers: Keep it short. Speak for yourself only - don't assume you know what the other person thinks or feels.
2. Partner B listens carefully to partner A.
Pointers: Don't interrupt. Focus on your partner's message.
3. Partner B repeats back to partner A what they heard and asks if what they heard was correct.
Pointers: Stick to what you heard. Wait for your turn to give your point of view.
4. Partner A either confirms or corrects. Repeat again.
6. Switch roles and practice twice more.

EXAMPLE of conversation:

(A) Mary: I feel hurt when you flirt with other girls. It makes me think you don't want to be with me.

(B) Joe: So you believe I don't love you when I look at other women?

(A) Mary: Yes, even if it's silly, that's how it makes me feel.

(B) Joe: Well, I'm glad you told me. It really means nothing when I look at other women. I'll try to curb the looking, but remember that I'm choosing to be with you, not them!

(A) Mary: I appreciate your trying to do that for me.

Possible issues for role playing:

NOTE: The brainstorm list from the class may include topics of sexual nature. Be prepared for how to acknowledge or eliminate them from your possible list.

Negatives:

- Calling me all the time.
- Not liking my friends or family.
- Wanting to be with me all the time.
- Controlling all relationship decisions

Positives:

- Asking my opinion about decisions
- Wanting to know my friends and respecting my time with them
- Allowing me to do things with family and/or friends

- Sharing what he/she likes about me to my face, not just through social media

Guidelines for Managing Conflict

Here are some important things to know about conflict in relationships:

- * All relationships have some conflict. Conflict in and of itself is not bad, it's how we react to the conflict that can be negative or destructive.
- * Too much conflict is not healthy however. It creates a negative environment for adults in the relationship, and it's especially unhealthy for any children that are in the picture.
- * It's OK and normal to have conflict as long as you work through it. This requires having the skills and strategies to do so.
- * It's important for people in a serious romantic relationship or marriage to do positive things for one another and to build a foundation of positive feelings. This way, when conflicts do arise, they don't suck all the energy out of the relationship.

Ways to manage conflict:

- * Prevent it from happening in the first place.
- * Show how important the issue is by meeting face-to-face rather than through email, texting or social media sites. It is very important to be able to show your seriousness and read your partner's non-verbal cues.
- * Be respectful. When you have a problem with something the person is doing, voice a complaint rather than a criticism. Consider the following phrasing:
 - Complaint (correct wording):** I get uncomfortable when you talk to your friends about the details of our relationship.
 - Criticism (avoid):** What is wrong with you? Can't you keep anything between us? You're always telling what we talk about and what we do. I'm never telling you anything important again!
- * Avoid name-calling, blaming, put-downs or using the words "always" and "never".
- * Avoid being defensive or "flipping the script" (Sidestepping or changing the topic) if your boyfriend/girlfriend voices a complaint.
- * Use good listening skills. Make sure that you understand what each other is saying, especially when discussing a difficult issue.
- * Build a foundation of positive feelings with one another by telling each other what you appreciate and looking out for each other. Strive to have more positive than negative interaction.

Managing conflict:

- * When you catch yourself being defensive, overly critical or blaming....STOP it.

*Do something to change the tone of an argument or to reduce the intensity; for example, hold up two fingers as a peace sign.

*Soften what you're saying to make it sound less hostile.

*Always explain how you feel by starting sentences with "I feel...", "I want to..." or so forth. If you only state how it affects you, then it is less likely to be challenged.

*De-brief the conflict.

*Sit down and talk after an argument. Talk about what YOU feel, not what they do because you only know it from your point of view.

*Take responsibility for your role in the problem. Be willing to meet in the middle.

*Discuss what both of you can do to make it better in the future.

If one partner does not want to resolve the problem:

*Both persons involved need to be ready to work out the conflict. Wait until both are ready.

*Come back to it, but do not wait too long as the negative emotions can build into something else.

*Depending upon the severity, seek professional help.

*If it gets abusive, leave. Think of your mental and physical health as well as others who are affected (like children).

Many uses of this information:

These tips have been developed to review boyfriend/girlfriend, however the same principles apply if it's a parent/child, brother/sister, adult child /parent and etc.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY DATING RELATIONSHIPS

- 1 **Each person is comfortable with who s/he is and has high self esteem.** Work on who you are and what you want before you get into a serious relationship. It's important not to feel like you need another person to make you complete.
- 2 **The two people like, admire and respect each other.** Choose a partner carefully. Take time to pick someone you like, admire and respect.
- 3 **Communication is open, clear and honest.** Become a good listener. It's important to be able to say what you're really thinking and feeling. It's also important to respect each other's boundaries and limits.
- 4 **Healthy couples recognize when they have conflict and can manage it without violence.** Conflict is normal and happens in all relationships. Managing conflict is a skill you can learn and practice. Don't fall into the trap of ignoring conflict. Communication is especially important when there is a conflict. Listen to each other, respect differences, compromise, talk about past disagreements and figure out what to do differently in the future. Conflict occurs with many individuals, but violence is more than the result of poor conflict resolution skills.
- 5 **Friendship is the basis of the relationship.** Make time to have fun and keep the friendship alive.
- 6 **Do things to show caring and appreciation for one another.** Learn what makes your boyfriend/girlfriend feel cared for and appreciated. This can feel like work sometimes, but healthy relationships require work.
- 7 **Trust each other.** You learn to trust by observing (over time and in different situations) that you can depend on someone. There are two sides to trust- being able to demonstrate that you trust someone and being able to act in a trustworthy fashion.
- 8 **Respect each other.** Accept each other's opinions, values, limits, need for individual time, and so on.
- 9 **Have people who can support you.** You never feel that you have to hide what's going on in the relationship. You have people around who are supportive.

Handout 1.5

10 Ways to Create Healthy Relationships

- 1 **Take care of yourself** before and while you're in a relationship. Have independent interests and activities that fulfill you. Never depend on a partner to make you feel complete.
- 2 **Choose a boyfriend/girlfriend that you like and admire** and who likes and admires you in return.
- 3 **Accept your boyfriend/girlfriend for who she or he is**, never count on changing them to fit your needs.
- 4 Become a **good communicator**.
- 5 Develop skills to **manage conflict**.
- 6 **Start by being a friend** and work to keep the friendship alive.
- 7 **Learn what makes your boyfriend/girlfriend feel loved** and appreciated.
- 8 **Discuss expectations** with each other. When each partner behaves in a trustworthy fashion, they can learn to trust each other. Honor commitments made.
- 9 **Respect each other's** opinions, limits, need for individual time, etc.
- 10 **Know where to get support or help** if you need it.

Unit 1: Healthy Relationships Interviews Assignment

(Make two copies, back to back as two couples will be interviewed. Can use with a panel if that option is selected. Students can ask and record answers to the same questions as below.)

INTERVIEW MARRIED COUPLES (two couples, one newly married (under 1 year); one long-term marriage (over 15 years))

- 1 How did you know that your spouse was “the one”?
- 2 How long was it from when you met until when you married?
- 3 How old were you when you got married?
- 4 How long have you been married?
- 5 Did you live together before getting married? Why or why not?
- 6 What was your wedding like?
- 7 What were your biggest challenges in the early days of your marriage? How did you handle those challenges?
- 8 How do you deal with conflict?
- 9 What do you think are some of the characteristics of successful marriages?
- 10 What do you think has to be in place for a relationship to last?
- 11 What material things did you have when you got married? What have you acquired since you got married?
- 12 Has your marriage fit your fantasy of the “ideal” marriage?
- 13 How would your life have been different if you had not married?
- 14 What advice would you give young people on getting married?

Handout 1.7

CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY MARRIAGES

Key Concepts and Assumptions:

- * Healthy marriages are not perfect marriages. A couple's marriage will go through ups and downs over time.
- * The ingredients of a healthy marriage can be learned. If a couple is willing and motivated, they can learn how to build and maintain a healthy marriage.
- * Healthy marriage refers to the relationship between two people. However, each individual will bring personal strengths or challenges to the relationship that make having a healthy marriage easier or harder.
- * A couple's individual circumstances, cultural background, resources, etc. will influence the way they perceive and experience marriage. All these things should be taken into consideration when assessing whether a marriage is healthy or not.

Characteristics:

- 1 Commitment.** Spouses take a long-term view of the relationship; they intend to hang in there when the going gets tough; they are dedicated to making the marriage work, which means they sometimes make personal sacrifices for the good of the relationship. They also are committed to any children they have from their own or previous relationships.
- 2 Fidelity/Faithfulness.** Spouses are faithful to each other and honor their commitments.
- 3 Acceptance of one another.** Spouses accept each other for who they are. When one person tries to get the other to change, they are usually met with resistance.
- 4 Trust.** Spouses trust each other. Each person acts in ways that 1) show they trust their spouse and 2) show that they are trustworthy.
- 5 Intimacy, love and affection.** Spouses in a healthy marriage express feelings of love, caring and deep connection with one another. They also act in ways that enable their spouse to feel cared for and appreciated, for example by spending time together, showing physical affection (including sexual intimacy), saying sweet things, giving gifts, etc.
- 6 Shared activities and friendships.** Spouses have positive interactions and do enjoyable things together on a regular basis.
- 7 Communication.** Spouses are honest with each other; they say what's on their mind rather than holding things in; and they really listen to each other.

- 8 Conflict resolution.** Conflict is normal and happens in all relationships. However, if there is too much criticizing, demanding, name-calling, holding grudges, and similar negativity - the relationship will suffer. Although this is not always true, men and women tend to have different styles of interacting and handling conflict. Women may be more likely to raise concerns and problems and want to talk about what they are feeling. Men may be more likely to avoid conflict and downplay the strong emotions that they feel inside. In healthy marriages, couples listen to each other carefully, especially when there is a conflict. They also avoid negative thinking patterns, such as thinking the worst about their spouse or jumping to negative conclusions. They use problem solving, talk about past conflicts, acknowledge mistakes, apologize, forgive, and learn from their mistakes.
- 9 Lack of violence.** When there are high levels of conflict or any violence in a marriage, it is not healthy and can be dangerous. In addition, high levels of conflict or violence of any type have a negative impact on children.
- 10 Satisfaction with the relationship.** Overall, spouses are satisfied with the marriage although levels of satisfaction go up and down at different points in the relationship.

*The content for this resource comes from K. Moore, S. Jekielek, J. Bronte-Tinkew, L. Guzman, S. Ryan and Z. Redd. *What is "Healthy Marriage"?* Defining the Concept. (Sept. 2004). Child Trends Research Brief, Pub. # 2004-16. http://www.childtrends.org/Files/CT_HealthyMarriage.pdf
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/copyright.html>

Important Relationship Pointers

Building Commitment Through Trust

- * Discuss your expectations with your partner and make sure you're on the same wavelength.
- * Behave in a trustworthy manner. (Honor any commitments. For example, if this is an exclusive relationship, manage outside temptations and avoid situations where you may betray your partner's trust.)
- * Respect your partner's personal limits and boundaries.
- * Show that you trust your partner, just as you expect them to trust you.

Communicate Effectively

- * Be honest - put what you're thinking or feeling out there - don't hold things in where they build up.
- * Listen for understanding - listen carefully (pay full attention; listen for the words and the feelings)

After listening, consider your understanding (repeat what you heard and have the other person confirm or correct your understanding).

- * Focus on your actions and feelings. Avoid negative patterns, such as criticizing, blaming, demanding, thinking the worst, trying to read your partner's mind, "flipping the script" (sidestepping or changing the topic), etc.

Manage Conflict Effectively

- * Recognize conflict - don't avoid it or deny that it's happening.
- * Discuss relationship conflicts in private, not in public.
- * Approach your partner face-to-face, not through email, texting or social media sites.
- * Listen to each other carefully when you disagree. You might need to wait to have the conversation when you both can listen calmly and carefully.
- * Avoid doing things to make the conflict more intense.
- * If you see that the conflict is getting out of control, take a time out.
- * Go back over past conflicts to discuss each person's role in the conflict and decide what to do differently next time.
- * Realize when it isn't working, and be prepared to walk away.

