

# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

## PROGRAM FACILITATOR TRAINING MANUAL



U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE  
CONTROL AND PREVENTION

# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Welcome &amp; Introduction Module</b>                                       | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Welcome to the Healthy Relationships Toolkit</b>                            | <b>4</b>  |
| What Is the Healthy Relationships Toolkit?                                     | 4         |
| Virtual and Youth Program Implementation                                       | 5         |
| Inside a Teen's World  | 5         |
| The Influence of Teen Dating Relationships on Emotional Development and Health | 7         |
| Implementing the Healthy Relationships Toolkit                                 | 8         |
| <b>Lesson 1: Let's Go! Running with the Healthy Relationships Toolkit</b>      | <b>9</b>  |
| The Importance of Program Fidelity   | 9         |
| <b>Lesson 2: Facilitating Like a Pro</b>                                       | <b>10</b> |
| Facilitation Skills  | 10        |
| Important Points for Facilitators to Remember                                  | 11        |
| What a Facilitator Is Not  | 11        |
| Participant Safety and Well-being  | 12        |
| How to Keep a Group Moving Through a Session                                   | 15        |
| <b>Lesson 3: Group Dynamics</b>  | <b>16</b> |
| Encouraging Group Discussion   | 16        |
| Overcoming the Challenges of Group Facilitation                                | 18        |
| Managing Different Personalities   | 19        |
| <b>Parent Program Module</b>   | <b>22</b> |
| <b>Rundown of the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Parent Programs</b>            | <b>22</b> |
| <b>Why Are the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Parent Programs Important?</b>    | <b>23</b> |
| <b>Leading Parents Through the Healthy Relationships Toolkit</b>               | <b>25</b> |
| Recruitment  | 25        |
| Strategies to Keep Parents Coming to Sessions                                  | 26        |
| How to Make Up Missed Sessions   | 26        |
| Prep and Logistics   | 27        |
| <b>Lesson 1: Gearing Up for the 6th Grade Program</b>                          | <b>29</b> |
| Session 1: Parents Make a Difference   | 29        |
| Session 2: Parenting Positively  | 30        |
| Session 3: Parents Are Educators   | 30        |
| Session 4: I Think I Can, I Know I Can   | 31        |
| Session 5: Parents Are Role Models   | 31        |
| Session 6: Moving Forward  | 33        |

# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Lesson 2: Gearing Up for the 7th Grade Program</b>                            | <b>34</b> |
| Session 1: Parenting Positively  | 34        |
| Session 2: Let's Talk, Part 1 (In-Home)  | 37        |
| Session 3: Parenting by Example  | 37        |
| Session 4: Let's Talk, Part 2 (In-Home)  | 40        |
| Session 5: Parenting Skillfully  | 40        |
| Session 6: Let's Talk, Part 3 (In-Home)  | 41        |
| <b>Lesson 3: Interceptions and Post-Game Recap</b>                               | <b>41</b> |
| Interceptions: Potential Challenges with Participants                            | 42        |
| <b>Youth Program Module</b>  | <b>43</b> |
| <b>Lesson 1: Rundown of the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Youth Programs</b>     | <b>43</b> |
| Why Are the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Youth Programs Important?              | 43        |
| Getting to Know the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Youth Programs                 | 44        |
| <b>Lesson 2: Leading Students Through the Youth Programs</b>                     | <b>45</b> |
| Session Overviews  | 45        |
| Getting to Know the Schools  | 46        |
| Managing a Room Full of Middle Schoolers   | 46        |
| Group Agreements and Expectations  | 49        |
| Session 1: Healthy Relationships (6th & 7th Grades)                              | 50        |
| Session 2: Understanding Feelings (6th Grade)                                    | 50        |
| Session 2: Understanding Feelings (7th Grade)                                    | 51        |
| Session 3: Staying in Control of Feelings (6th Grade)                            | 53        |
| Session 3: Staying in Control of Feelings & Making Healthy Decisions (7th Grade) | 53        |
| Session 4: Healthy Communications (6th & 7th Grades)                             | 55        |
| Session 5: Unhealthy and Unsafe Relationships (6th & 7th Grades)                 | 56        |
| Session 6: Staying Safe in Relationships (6th Grade)                             | 57        |
| Session 6: Sexual Violence and Dating Safety (7th Grade)                         | 57        |
| Session 7: HeaRT Rewind (6th Grade)  | 60        |
| Session 7: Relationship Rights and Getting Help (7th Grade)                      | 60        |
| <b>Lesson 3: Interceptions and Post Game Recap</b>                               | <b>61</b> |
| Interceptions: Potential Challenges with Participants                            | 62        |

# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

## Welcome & Introduction Module

### WELCOME TO THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT

Welcome to the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Facilitator Training. This training manual will help facilitators—like you!—learn how to deliver the the Healthy Relationships Toolkit (HeaRT) youth and parent programs in your community. It also serves as a companion guide to the online training, with copies of the exercises and activities so you can take notes and reference the material later. This training provides an opportunity for you to learn about the youth and parent programs, practice conducting actual sessions, and exchange feedback on implementation skills with your Coach.

The Healthy Relationships Toolkit: Empowering Teens to Build Safe and Supportive Relationships was previously referred to as Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships. The online facilitator training has not yet been updated to reflect this change; however, the content is still applicable to implementing HeaRT programs. When the names of programs or sessions have also changed, these will be noted in this manual as well.

Module 1 of this online training provides important information about HeaRT and the skills you will need to deliver it in your community effectively. All facilitators must complete this first module regardless of whether you will be working with youth or parents. Modules 2 and 3 will help you learn much more about the specifics of the youth and parent programs, depending on which program you will be facilitating. Even if you are working with only one of these two groups, you may find that it is a good idea to complete the training for both so you will have a comprehensive view of the entire HeaRT model. Facilitators of the i2i Youth Communications Program are also encouraged to complete Module 1 of this training.

### WHAT IS THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT?

Promoting healthy, respectful, and nonviolent relationships can significantly reduce the incidence of violence in adolescence and its harmful, long-lasting effects on individuals, families, and communities. During the preteen and teen years, it is essential for young people to learn important skills, such as managing emotions and practicing healthy communication, to build and maintain positive relationships.

HeaRT is a CDC-developed violence prevention model that teaches 11 to 14-year-olds healthy relationship skills early. HeaRT's evidence-based approach includes seven components for individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods that work together to prevent dating violence, sexual violence, bullying, and other risk behaviors.

Three of these components happen at the **community level** (General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention Tool, Guide to Using Indicator Data, and Interactive Guide to Informing Policy). Two happen at the **community and relationship levels** (i2i Youth Communications Program and Training for Educators). This facilitator training focuses on the remaining two components (Youth Programs and Parent Programs) that take place at both the **individual and relationship levels**.





The programmatic components of HeaRT are designed for two distinct audiences: middle school-aged youth and their parents or caregivers. The youth programs focus on 6th to 8th graders to help them create healthy, safe relationships and prevent violence in adolescence. The parent programs complement this youth training by giving parents strategies and tools they can use at home to talk to their teens about healthy relationships.

### Youth Programs

HeaRT youth programs provide middle school youth with the knowledge and social-emotional skills (e.g., emotional expression and management, social skills) they need to expect and engage in healthy, safe relationships. CDC developed the 6th- and 7th-grade programs and adopted an existing evidence-based program for 8th grade. Teachers, school staff, or outside educators frequently serve as facilitators, who can deliver the programs during the school day.

- **HeaRT for 6th Graders** provides youth with opportunities to learn and enhance relationship skills in an engaging and non-threatening manner by first exploring what it means to have healthy friendships across seven sessions.
- **HeaRT for 7th Graders** reinforces the information and skills developed in the 6th-grade program with seven sessions that provide further information on sexual violence, dating safety, and relationship rights, as well as access to supportive resources.
- **Safe Dates (8th grade)** builds upon the skills and knowledge students learn in the 6th- and 7th-grade HeaRT programs with ten sessions focused more heavily on specific attitudes and behaviors related to teen dating violence, including sexual violence.

### Parent Programs

HeaRT parent programs provide parents and caregivers of 11- to 14-year-olds with positive parenting and effective parent-child communication skills while also helping them engage in a dialogue with their kids about healthy, safe relationships. CDC developed the 6th- and 7th-grade programs and adopted an existing evidence-based program for 8th grade. Facilitators, such as health educators, deliver the programs in community-based settings and/or through self-guided activities for parents.

- **HeaRT for Parents (6th grade)** educates parents and caregivers through six group sessions on the issues their children face; improves their ability to communicate with their children about healthy relationships and sexuality;

and helps them develop parenting practices that will decrease the likelihood of their children being exposed to unhealthy relationships.

- **HeaRT for Parents (7th grade)** focuses on positive parenting and provides parents and caregivers with strategies and skills needed to communicate with their children about healthy relationships and sexual behaviors through three group sessions and three self-guided, in-home sessions.
- **Families for Safe Dates (8th grade)** enables parents and their teens to jointly explore different topics regarding teen dating violence through six booklets, one for parents only and five for parents and their teens.
- **HeaRT: Training for Parents** is a free, self-administered online training for parents and caregivers developed by CDC to ensure that all families have access to core content from the HeaRT parent programs at no cost. Schools and community organizations can promote the training for parents in addition to offering the in-person, facilitated programs or instead of those programs to reach as many families as possible.

### VIRTUAL AND YOUTH PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Virtual learning is increasingly common. It can save money, time, and make it easier for participants to attend. Your community may find it helpful or necessary to implement one or more of the HeaRT youth and parent programs in a virtual classroom rather than in person. Although the potential impact of virtual implementation on program effectiveness is unknown, the facilitator guides for the youth and parent programs include suggested adaptation options designed to maintain essential elements of the program without compromising fidelity or efficacy. See your facilitator guide for additional guidance and tips on virtual adaptation.

### INSIDE A TEEN'S WORLD

Teen dating violence is a type of intimate partner violence. It occurs between two people in a close relationship. The nature of dating violence can be physical, emotional, or sexual, and includes four types of behaviors:

- **Physical violence** is when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force
- **Sexual violence** is forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act, sexual touching, or a non-physical sexual event (e.g., sexting) when the partner does not or cannot not consent

- **Psychological or emotional aggression** is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or exert control over another person
- **Stalking** is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone close to the person experiencing the stalking

Dating violence can take place in person or electronically, such as repeated texting or posting sexual pictures of a partner online. Unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime. Teens often think some behaviors, like teasing and name-calling, are a “normal” part of a relationship—but these behaviors can become abusive and develop into serious forms of violence. However, many teens do not report unhealthy behaviors because they are afraid to tell family and friends.

### How big is the problem?

**Teen dating violence is common.** It affects millions of teens in the U.S. each year. Data from CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey indicate that:

- About 1 out of every 12 high school students says they have experienced physical violence by a dating partner in the past year.
- About 1 out of 9 high school students says they have experienced sexual violence by a dating partner in the last year.
- Females, LGBTQ, and some racial and ethnic minorities are at higher risk for experiencing dating violence and sexual violence.
  - 1 in 5 females compared to about 1 in 12 males says they experienced any form of dating violence
  - More than 1 in 6 LGBTQ teens experience dating violence compared to 1 in 10 straight teens.
- Over 1 in 10 female teens and nearly 1 in 40 male teens report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year (Kann et al., 2018)
- Among adults that experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, 23% of women and 14% of men first experienced partner violence before they were 18 years old. (Basile et al., 2022)

### What are the consequences?

Unhealthy, abusive, or violent relationships can have severe consequences and short- and long-term negative effects on a developing teen. For instance, youth who experience dating violence are more likely to:

- Experience symptoms of depression and anxiety (Foshee et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2003; Exner-Cortens et al., 2013)
- Engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using tobacco, drugs, and alcohol (Foshee et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2003; Exner-Cortens et al., 2013)
- Exhibit antisocial behaviors (Roberts et al., 2003; Exner-Cortens et al., 2013)
- Think about suicide (Roberts et al., 2003; Exner-Cortens et al., 2013)
- Be victimized by a partner during college (Smith et al., 2013)

Violence in an adolescent relationship also sets the stage for problems in future relationships, including intimate partner violence and sexual violence perpetration and/or victimization throughout life.

### Did You Know? Teen Dating Violence Facts

#### Fact: Dating violence starts early.

Among adults that experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, 23% of women and 14% of men first experienced some form of partner violence between 11 and 17 years of age (Smith et al., 2017).

#### Fact: Teen dating violence affects both girls and boys

In a 2021 survey, 19% of females and 8% of males who dated in the last 12 months experienced physical, sexual, or both kinds of dating violence.

#### Fact: Dating violence does not only affect straight teens.

Teens who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual are more likely to experience dating violence than those in straight relationships (Clayton et al., 2023)

#### Fact: A teen's home environment influences their risk for dating violence

Teens who see violence between their parents/guardians are more likely to perpetrate dating violence (Temple, Shorey, Tortolero, Wolfe, & Stuart, 2013; Duke, Pettingell, McMorris, & Borowsky, 2010).

#### Fact: People that experience dating violence usually don't tell anyone about their abuse.

Only 33% of teens who experience dating violence ever told anyone about the dating violence (Liz Claiborne Inc., 2005).

## THE INFLUENCE OF TEEN DATING RELATIONSHIPS ON EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

### Healthy emotional development is tied to the prevention of a wide variety of problem behaviors, including teen dating violence.

HearT devotes several sessions in each youth and parent program to promoting healthy emotional development among teens. Specifically, these sessions promote emotional literacy, or the ability to identify, understand, and respond to feelings in a healthy and safe way. We work this content throughout the rest of the sessions, as well. This focus is for good reason. Emotional development is “firmly tied to every other area of growth and development—physical growth and health, communication and language development, and cognitive skills, as well as the child’s early relationships” (Cohen, Onunaku, Clothier, & Poppe, 2005). Healthy emotional development is also linked to academic success and the prevention of a wide range of problem behaviors and mental health concerns (e.g., anxiety, general aggression) that are linked to teen dating violence perpetration and victimization (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Vagi et al., 2013).

### Healthy peer relationships lay the foundation for healthy dating relationships.

HearT youth and parent programs focus a great deal on peer relationships. This is because research tells us that relationships with friends are a primary source of influence for youth (e.g., Parker, Rubin, Price, & DeRosier, 1995). Friends serve as “testing grounds” for experiencing and managing feelings as they arise in voluntary (versus involuntary, e.g., familial relationships) close relationships (Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 2004). Relationships with friends can also act as “safety zones” for youth that may help them cope with the numerous changes (e.g., new roles, identities, physical changes) that accompany adolescence (Giordano, 2003). Friends serve as both models and sources of social support for beginning and maintaining dating relationships and for coping with periods of difficulty in them (Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 1999).

### Youth spend a great deal of time thinking about and/or involved in dating relationships.

You are probably not surprised to learn that youth (preteens and teens) spend a significant amount of time thinking about, talking about, and participating in dating relationships (Furman, 2002). In fact, research tells us that 34% of female teens and 25% of male teens attribute their strongest feelings to actual or fantasized romantic relationships. These percentages are higher than those of any other

topic, including family, school, and friends (Wilson-Shockley, 1995, as cited in Furman, 2002). So, although dating is not the only thing on youths’ minds, it certainly is at the top of their minds.

### Healthy dating relationships can have a positive impact on development.

HearT focuses on preventing teen dating violence as well as promoting healthy and safe relationship behaviors with others, including peers and dating partners. We know that healthy, positive peer relationships can have a positive impact on youth development. For example, positive peer relationships are linked to positive self-image, enhanced leadership skills, and greater academic achievement (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2015). Healthy dating relationships can also have a positive impact on youth development by helping teens develop and practice interpersonal skills, communication and negotiation skills, and empathy—all skills needed to develop long-term, committed relationships in adulthood (Furman & Collins, 2009). Furthermore, although breakups may put some youth at risk for depression, breakups may also help youth develop emotional resiliency and coping skills needed to handle difficulties later in life (Barber & Eccles, 2003).

### Dating relationships can also have a negative impact on development.

Although healthy dating relationships can have a positive impact on development, teen dating behaviors can be a cause of significant concern. Unhealthy dating relationships are linked to poor emotional health, behavior problems, academic underperformance, and alcohol and drug use, among other problems (Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner, & Collins, 2001; Ellis, Crooks, & Wolfe, 2009). Youth are particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in unhealthy or unsafe relationships—including those that involve dating violence (Collins, 2003). Teen dating violence may start with teasing and name-calling, which many people may think are just part of growing up, but these behaviors may be emotionally harmful and may precede other types of serious violence like physical assault, sexual coercion, and rape. People who experience teen dating violence are more likely to be depressed and to report binge drinking, smoking, marijuana use, suicidal ideation, and antisocial behaviors (Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode, & Rothman, 2013).

## IMPLEMENTING THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT

We designed HeaRT to be implemented by a team of skilled individuals. It is important that staff have experience working with youth and families in their communities. You may need to adjust program delivery to be culturally appropriate and specific to your population. This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the HeaRT Prevention Lead, the Coach, and the Youth and Parent Program Facilitators. A solid understanding of each of these roles is important so that all staff members are aware of their responsibilities. This awareness enables them to access support and guidance while maintaining important boundaries.

### Healthy Relationships Toolkit Prevention Lead

The Prevention Lead typically sits at the local health department or organization overseeing HeaRT. They are responsible for enhancing your community's capacity for preventing violence and for fostering relationships with implementation and community partners. The Prevention Lead (and Coach) is responsible for working with the schools to prepare for implementation. The Prevention Lead may also work with the Coach to recruit participants and develop partnerships for recruitment. In addition, the Prevention Lead:

- Designs and monitors program evaluation
- Conducts or oversees analyses and quality improvement activities
- Secures access to required training and materials
- Monitors the budget
- Coordinates a Community Advisory Board
- Identifies and secures venue(s)
- Plans for sustainability
- Implements and oversees work on the Policy and Indicators components of HeaRT

### The Healthy Relationships Toolkit Coach

Even the most experienced, best-prepared facilitators will occasionally encounter unexpected or complex situations that will require assistance, whether during training, supervision, or while facilitating a session. Your Coach should be your go-to person! They will guide you through the training process, complete in-person role-plays during training, and provide supervision and support when you facilitate the programs with youth and parents. While your Coach will meet with you regularly for supervision, they will also be available outside of scheduled meetings or check-ins, as needs arise.

Coaches oversee the completion of session logs and other process surveys that your community may use for evaluation (e.g., Parent Satisfaction Form). Your Coach will also review your session logs and identify any particular areas of concern. These might include fidelity (or, delivery of the curriculum as designed), sections that proved to be challenging, parent engagement, and time management. Supervision meetings will involve some administrative time where your Coach ensures that you submit session logs and other materials in a timely manner. However, the focus of the supervision meetings should be on increasing your ability to facilitate HeaRT with fidelity. Supervision can occur individually or in groups. Individual supervision may make it easier to accommodate schedules, but group supervision allows facilitators to learn from one another's experiences while receiving guidance and feedback on challenging situations.

### Healthy Relationships Toolkit Youth & Parent Program Facilitators

That's you! Your role as a program facilitator is so very important to stopping violence in adolescence at the most critical juncture of these teens' lives. Again, think about the time when you were in middle school. For many of us, it was a time when we were the most vulnerable, the most impressionable, the most insecure, and the most likely to make some bad decisions.

This is why your participation in helping teens change their behavior—through the simple yet effective strategies found in the HeaRT Youth and Parent Programs—will have a profound impact on their lives and their futures as caring, responsible adults who engage in healthy relationships.



In addition to delivering each session of the program, you are responsible for:

- Maintaining positive relationships with program participants
- Clearly and thoroughly explaining all concepts
- Managing group dynamics
- Facilitating discussions of session content
- Requesting feedback and assistance from your Coach to help sustain or enhance program fidelity
- Perhaps most importantly, creating a safe and accepting learning environment

The online training and this training manual provide you with the information you need to fulfill your role as a HeaRT program facilitator. Several other resources are also available to support you in this effort. As noted above, your Coach will help you throughout program facilitation. Coaches have a playbook with activities to reinforce some of the key points you will learn in this training. Additionally, facilitator guides are available online to help you feel confident teaching sessions with youth or parents. Once you log in to the program facilitator training using your access code, you can use these facilitator guides and other program materials. We strongly suggest that you take the HeaRT Training for Educators before beginning the online facilitator training. If you did not get a chance to check that out yet, don't worry! You can complete it anytime on the HeaRT website at: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/heart>.

## LESSON 1: LET'S GO! RUNNING WITH THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT

Although the content of the program is important, your skills as a facilitator in delivering the sessions are equally important.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAM FIDELITY

One thing that is extremely important when facilitating HeaRT is fidelity. Fidelity means that a program or session is delivered as it was designed. To ensure that the sessions will influence participants in the expected ways, it is essential for facilitators to maintain fidelity to the program. It should not matter whether someone participates in HeaRT in Oakland, California, or with you in your local community. Regardless of location or facilitator, all participants should receive the same information and in a similar way. To maintain fidelity, facilitators should follow the facilitator guide in order; not omit any content or activities; and deliver all sessions as they are described. By doing this, you will address the key themes and messages and include all essential activities and learning strategies in the sessions.

#### To maintain fidelity: DO

- Complete all group sessions in order
- Encourage parents to complete all home sessions in order
- Use the diverse teaching methods (e.g., presentations, group discussions, small group activities, role-plays, handouts, videos) to appeal to different learning styles
- Create a positive learning environment through the use of ground rules and the application of adult learning principles
- Follow guidance for implementation preparation in this manual and review tips and materials needed in the facilitator guide
- Complete session logs and provide them to your Coach

#### To maintain fidelity: DON'T

- Delete sessions, information, or activities within a session
- Add information that is not consistent with the key messages in the HeaRT for youth and parent program
- Change activities or information presented

In addition to the “Do’s and Don’ts” above, you also have access to carefully written scripts in your facilitator guide. We designed these specifically to help you meet the goal of each training session. You do not need to read the scripts word for word, but you should follow the scripts as closely as possible and clearly convey their messages and instructions. Maintaining fidelity does not necessarily mean that you can only talk about the points that are included in the facilitator guide. At times, you will need to expand on certain points to get the messages across to youth and parents. An important facilitation skill is to recognize when participants need more information to understand the discussion topic. This is fine as long as you stay on topic and within the time frames allotted for the session. Participants also may raise issues and examples that are not included in the facilitator guide. One of the facilitator’s responsibilities is to connect the issues and examples brought up by participants to the program material and key messages.

**Except where specifically indicated**, you should not read the facilitator guide aloud to participants. Instead, read the material ahead of time and become comfortable with the messages and discussion points so that you can put them in your own words. You can also make the material relevant to your community by using language, examples, and statistics that will resonate with your audience. Make notes to yourself in the facilitator guide and practice delivering the sessions so that you can engage participants while maintaining fidelity to the program. You should practice all of the sessions at least once.

## LESSON 2: FACILITATING LIKE A PRO

Did you know that **how** you deliver the HeaRT information as a facilitator is important? Your enthusiasm and the way you relate to the participants in your group are critical to the success of the program. Read through the qualities of effective facilitators below.

### FACILITATION SKILLS

#### Effective Facilitators:

- Provide a supportive learning environment.
- Value what participants bring to the group.
- Handle sensitive issues and conflicts.
- Are non-judgmental.
- Know the influence of their own values and attitudes.

#### Facilitators Are Skilled Communicators who:

- Facilitate discussion.
- Observe and listen.
- Are approachable.
- Speak clearly.
- Use words that are easily understood by participants.

#### Facilitators Are Highly Approachable and:

- Establish warm relationships with group members.
- Speak well of everyone.
- Like and trust group members rather than fear them.
- Build trust with participants.

#### Facilitators Are Always Prepared and:

- Have objectives and goals clearly outlined.
- Have information well categorized so they can retrieve it in response to questions.
- Acknowledge what they do not know (i.e., the facilitator is not always the expert).
- Use time well.
- Have working knowledge of multimedia devices (e.g., projector).
- Prepare in advance.

#### Facilitators Are Enthusiastic:

- About the content of the program.
- About people.
- About the process.

#### Facilitators have the ability to conduct role-plays, which will:

- Model skills taught.
- Allow participants to practice those skills.

## IMPORTANT POINTS FOR FACILITATORS TO REMEMBER

### When Working with Parents, Effective Facilitators:

- Acknowledge and respect diverse family patterns.
- Build upon the existing skills, experiences, and knowledge of the parents instead of assuming they are starting from a place of inadequacy.
- Focus on parents' strengths rather than their weaknesses.
- Recognize the effect that children have on parents (not just the effect of parents on their children).
- Do not act as the expert—act as a guide and facilitate the learning process in a professional manner.
- Help the group move along, provide information, and help parents learn specific skills.
- Follow the session activities in the facilitator guide and help participants stick to the topics and activities described for each session.
- Provide a lot of encouragement to the parents.
- Model the skills being taught (e.g., active listening, positive feedback).
- Relax and have fun!

### WHAT A FACILITATOR IS NOT

It is critical that facilitators recognize they are **not** to serve as therapists, moral leaders, or friends to the participants. You need to maintain appropriate boundaries in the classroom. In general, facilitators should **avoid**:

- Sharing personal information related to intimacy, substance use, violence, religious views, or personal values.
- Engaging in interactions that could create the appearance of favoritism.
- Fostering students' dependence on them for individual support.

#### Inappropriate Role

#### Potential Risk

Facilitator as therapist

Making a participant depend on you for support. This, in turn, may inhibit the participant from seeking professional help beyond the program.

Facilitator as friend

Looking like you are playing favorites within the group or encouraging the idea that there is potential for developing a friendship outside the group.

Facilitator as moral leader

Alienating participants who hold belief systems different from yours or from others in the group.

Harming members with particular beliefs.

Altering research-based aspects of program content with evidence that they benefit parents and their children.

Keep in mind that maintaining good boundaries is just as important in one-on-one interactions with participants as it is when working with the entire group. If a participant approaches you before or after a group session to discuss a personal issue, there are ways you can be responsive to the person's needs without compromising your role as a facilitator. You should express compassion and reinforce relevant messages from the program. You can also direct them to relevant agencies or other resources that are appropriate to the situation. Remember, it is NOT your role nor the purpose of HeaRT to provide individual support to group members.

## PARTICIPANT SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

It is important to keep in mind that certain pieces of HeaRT may trigger distress in an adolescent or parent, due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter you are presenting. You should have a site-specific protocol for handling distress, suspected child abuse and neglect, imminent harm, and other special situations that may arise. While we do not anticipate these issues occurring too often, it is a great idea to keep this on hand for sessions just in case. Your Coach can help you locate and review your site's protocol.

You will not be able to predict what information participants may reveal during a given session or the distress they may experience. You will want to be proactive in describing the limits to confidentiality and privacy to participants during the first session of each program when you set the ground rules. Hopefully your work will foster meaningful discussion, thought, and positive change in your community.

### Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Although HeaRT does not specifically address child abuse or neglect, a participant may volunteer this information, or you may observe an interaction between a parent and child that causes concern. Because the program addresses violence, including sexual violence, there is a chance that youth or parents may begin to discuss family violence or neglectful parenting. Be prepared to identify and respond to suspected child abuse or neglect.

In every state, there is a duty for some, if not all, citizens to report suspected child abuse and neglect. This is known as **mandatory reporting**. Each state's laws and statutes vary, so be sure to familiarize yourself with them. Your Coach can help direct you to the right resources in your area.

You can find more information about mandatory reporting in your state by visiting: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>

### Recognizing and Addressing Distress

When you are facilitating HeaRT, the discussions may make participants feel uncomfortable or experience distress. These reactions are not common but can happen when participating in a violence prevention program. Distress is the body's response to discomfort. It can be difficult to recognize and may be mild, moderate, or extreme.

It is possible that a participant will make a disclosure without exhibiting distress, and without disclosing suspected child abuse or neglect, or imminent harm. As a check to make sure you are not misreading a lack of apparent distress, you may want to summarize what the participant said and acknowledge their feelings (e.g., "You sound like you're feeling all right about what happened with your girlfriend last weekend.") If distress is not apparent, we suggest facilitators provide the participant with a resource handout that contains relevant national and local resources. Be sure to check with your Coach about any policies or procedures developed specifically for your community.

### Requests for Referral

It is also possible that a parent or youth will request a referral from you without displaying any type of distress or disclosing suspected child abuse or neglect or imminent harm.

Examples include the following:

- "Can you tell me how I can find out more about dating abuse or helping a friend who has experienced dating abuse?"
- "Who would I talk to if I hear about my son/daughter/friend being in an abusive relationship?"

The facilitator should provide the resource handout and indicate an appropriate organization for the individual's question/issue.

## Types of Distress

| MILD DISTRESS  |  |
|--|--|
| CHARACTERISTICS:   | EXAMPLE:   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Statement made about being worried, nervous, and/or sad</li> <li>● No emotional reaction</li> </ul> | <p>"I'm concerned that my son might follow in my footsteps and end up in a violent dating relationship because he witnessed his father and me arguing frequently." (There are no visible signs of distress; he shows no tears or emotional reaction.)</p> <p>"My friend is always hiding her cell phone from me. I feel like she doesn't want me to see what her boyfriend is texting her because she knows he's being mean or trying to control her."</p> |

| MODERATE DISTRESS   |   |
|---|---|
| CHARACTERISTICS:  | EXAMPLE:  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May report feeling bad or being sad</li> <li>● Shows some emotional reaction, such as being tearful, looking anxious, or having nervous speech</li> <li>● Recovers from emotional reaction, able to calm him- or herself down</li> </ul> | <p>"I'm sad that my child saw her father and me fighting all the time. I just did not know that it might affect her like this." (Tears coming down face, picking at her fingernail, cries but then recovers.)</p> <p>"I'm tired of running into my room and locking the door every time I hear my parents fighting. Don't they realize I can hear through the walls? It totally messes me up and ruins my whole night. Sometimes I don't even want to come home from school."</p> |

| EXTREME DISTRESS   |  |
|--|--|
| CHARACTERISTICS:   | EXAMPLE:   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extreme emotional reactions, including inability to stop crying and expressions of anger that do not subside and are so intense, facilitator worries about the participant</li> <li>● Statements expressing extreme hopelessness, sadness, or depression escalate in severity; participant may volunteer more information about depressive symptoms (e.g., overeating or not eating, not sleeping or sleeping too much, thoughts of suicide or homicide, no interest in anything, loss of affect or functioning at work/school/home)</li> </ul> | <p>"I cannot believe that my behaviors are going to have so much of an impact on my child. My child deserves a much better parent than me. Maybe I just need to end it all right now."</p> <p>"I saw my friend's boyfriend grab her pretty hard, and I didn't do anything because I was scared. But I swear if I ever see him do that again, I am going to get him BAD. I feel guilty, though, for not saying anything at the time, and I'm wondering what else is going on when we're not at school."</p> |



## How to Handle Participants with Mild to Moderate Distress

If a participant shows signs of mild or moderate distress during a session, you should:

- Acknowledge the participant's feelings. (e.g., "I see that you got upset during the role-play we just completed.")
- Ask if the participant would like to take a short break.
- Evaluate whether the distress is extreme.

You should also note any patterns to the distress, or if the distress seems associated with specific content. If the distress is not extreme and the participant appears to recover quickly, you can provide them with an option to continue with the session or take a break and meet outside of the room in private.

## How to Handle Participants with Extreme Distress

There may be times when a participant exhibits an extreme reaction to material in a session. Examples of extreme reactions include uncontrollable crying or anger outbursts, where the person is unable to calm down. Extreme distress may also occur in relation to personal disclosures, or may be linked with imminent harm or suspected child abuse and neglect.

In both the student and the parent programs, you should contact your Coach to report what happened following the session. In addition, if you assess that the situation poses the threat of imminent harm, you should follow the site's safety monitoring protocol.

If a **youth exhibits extreme distress** during a session, you should:

- Stop the session.
- Contact the first responder at the school (e.g., guidance counselor, nurse, or other school official as identified in advance in coordination with school staff) so that the youth can be removed from the classroom and taken to a safe place where they can calm down.
- Once the person's safety is secured, reassure the class that they are safe and that there are times when discussions may make someone upset.
- Assess the distress level among the other students.

If no distress is present among others, continue with the session. If other youth are exhibiting mild, moderate, or extreme distress, follow the appropriate steps as outlined in your site's safety monitoring protocol.

If a **parent exhibits extreme distress** during a session, you should:

- Stop the session.
- Coordinate with the other facilitator to take the distressed parent out of the room and into a private area where they can calm down.
- Contact the first responder for the organization. If the first responder is on-site, the other facilitator can return to the session once that person arrives to be with the parent. If the first responder is off-site, the other facilitator should develop a plan of action with the first responder by phone or other communication.

## HOW TO KEEP A GROUP MOVING THROUGH A SESSION

In any group setting, some people will always need prompting, and others tend to take over discussions. With the topics covered in these programs, it is not unusual for some participants to want to spend additional time discussing concerns, issues, and experiences. Group discussion is an important part of this program, but when it becomes overly long, it can interfere with being able to get through all the material for a particular session. Here are some strategies to restrict a group discussion in order to get through all of the materials for a session:

### **Establish Appropriate Expectations**

Establish appropriate expectations at the first session. Emphasize the importance of reviewing all of the material for each session during discussion of the ground rules in Session 1. Explain the importance of group discussion and the need to limit discussion sometimes in order to get through all the material. Explain the concept of “Parking Lot” (see explanation below) and how it will be used throughout the sessions. Explaining this during the first session establishes an expectation that sometimes discussions may have to end.

### **Parking Lot**

Attach a sheet of easel paper labeled “Parking Lot” to the wall. Have Post-it notes and pens available for participants to use. When limiting discussions, ask participants if they want to put the topic or issue on the Parking Lot. At the end of the session, refer participants to the topics and issues listed on the Parking Lot and determine whether participants would like further discussion of the topics or issues listed.

### **One-Minute Rule**

Impose a one-minute rule to reduce discussion time (or to prevent one or two participants from taking over the discussions). When the one-minute rule is in effect, speakers are limited to one minute each to make their point or express their view. If there are problems with participants adhering to the time limitation, you can ask for a volunteer timekeeper to keep track of the time and signal when the person’s one minute is up.

### **One Comment Per Person Rule**

If one program participant is continually taking over the discussion by interrupting others in the group, impose a rule of one comment per person. When this rule is in effect, no person can comment again until all members of the group have had the opportunity to comment.

### **Positive Approach**

Tell participants that it is time to move on to the next topic. Start by acknowledging the positive aspects of the discussion (e.g., “this is a great discussion” or “those are some great points”) and then inform participants that in order to get through all the material, talks need to move forward (e.g., “We have some additional points to cover, and we need to move on.”). Refer to item Number 6 on the posted ground rules to support the need to proceed.

### **Addressing Personal Problems**

Given the nature of the topics covered in HeaRT, there may be times when a participant decides to use the group to discuss personal problems. Tell program attendees they can speak with you during breaks or at the end of the session regarding where they can get additional information or assistance with their personal concerns. One thing that may work is to say, “That seems like something that is really important to you. You and I can talk about it during the break, if you’d like.” When appropriate, provide a list of resources where participants can get information or assistance and include this list along with the parent handbook.

## LESSON 3: GROUP DYNAMICS

Managing group dynamics requires particular care and skill. In the course of delivering the youth and parent programs, you will create opportunities for participants to share sensitive topics, such as dating, sexuality, and family relationships. When called for in the program, sharing one's experiences (and the emotions and perspectives behind them) can be healthy and productive for participants. At the same time, these topics are highly emotional for some participants and may be the subject of strongly held personal opinions and ethical and religious beliefs. In striking this balance, your role is to do the following:

- **Maintain focus.** Keep students on topic.
- **Stay on message.** Rather than contributing personal opinions to a classroom discussion, an effective facilitator uses the discussion as an opportunity to reinforce relevant messages from the program.
- **Encourage participation.** Allow opportunities for all students to contribute.
- **Recognize contributions.** Recognize each student's contributions and summarize before moving on.

Keep in mind it will be important for you to pace yourself as you move through the topics in a given session in order to make sure you cover all the material. To help with this, each section has an estimated time guideline listed in a clock icon next to the section heading. You should do your best to keep to the allotted time for each section, knowing that sometimes there may be discussions that will make it more challenging to move on to the next section.

### ENCOURAGING GROUP DISCUSSION

Group discussions are a large part of each HeaRT session. They provide participants an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, but they also allow you an opportunity to ensure that participants understand the information you are sharing. Although it is not necessary for you to comment on each statement made by participants, at times, you will need to assist in the group discussions to keep them on track and to make sure the appropriate messages are conveyed. Skills that facilitators can use in encouraging group discussion, along with the purpose of the skills and examples, are in the table below.

| Action                 | Goal  | Examples   |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Paraphrase             | Restate what the participant said using your own words—this will make the participant feel like they are understood and other participants can hear a concise summary of what has been said.              | “So, what you are saying is that we need to take time and effectively communicate with our children.”  |
| Check for meaning      | Check your understanding of a participant’s statement or ask the participant to clarify what they are saying.   | “I am not sure that I understand exactly what you mean. Are you saying that this approach is not realistic?”   |
| Give positive feedback | Compliment an interesting or insightful comment, thought, or behavior. Positive feedback also may be used to reinforce group participation of any kind, especially for participants who are quiet or shy. | “That’s a good point. I am glad that you brought that to our attention.”   |
| Expand                 | Elaborate on a participant’s contribution to the discussion with examples or suggest a new way to view the problem.   | “Your comments provide an interesting point from the parent’s perspective. It could also be useful to consider how a child would view the same situation.”   |
| Increase the pace      | Energize a discussion by quickening the pace or prompting the group for more contributions.   | “Ok, we have lots of tired people at this group! Here is a challenge for you. For the next two minutes, let us see how many ideas we come up with for difficult topics that parents and children should discuss.”      |
| Play devil’s advocate  | Disagree (gently) with a participant’s comments to stimulate further discussion.  | “I can see where you are coming from, but I am not sure that what you are describing is always the case. Has anyone else had an experience that is different from Joaquin’s?”  |
| Relieve tension        | Mediate differences of opinion between participants and relieve any tensions that may be brewing.   | “I think Jennifer and Michelle are not really disagreeing with each other but are just bringing out two different sides of this issue.”  |
| Consolidate            | Pull together ideas, showing their relationship to each other.  | “As you can see from Joe’s and Maria’s comments, setting boundaries with adolescents is very much a full-time effort. You need to be able to establish the rules and be consistent in order to see success with this.” |
| Summarize              | Summarize the major views of the group.   | “I have heard four topics that parents and their children should discuss:<br>(1) drugs and alcohol, (2) curfew, (3) sex, and (4) dating.”  |

## OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF GROUP FACILITATION

When the program materials ask you to lead an icebreaker or another type of activity, you should pay attention to both the level of participation and the content of the discussion. It is your responsibility to make sure the activity meets the objectives outlined for each session. If participants begin to discuss topics that take the activity in a direction other than its purpose, you should gently redirect the discussion back to the instructions provided at the start of the activity. When encouraging participation during group activities, it may be useful to consider these potential challenges and solutions:

| Potential Challenge  | Solution  |
|--|---|
| Participants are hesitant or fearful to speak in front of a group of strangers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an atmosphere of trust and respect among the group members to facilitate participants learning from one another.</li> <li>● Be considerate of any participant more comfortable speaking a language other than the one in which the group is being facilitated.</li> <li>● Assess whether a parent's anxiety is increasing to the point of possible distress and, if so, quickly move to another participant to alleviate the anxiety.</li> <li>● Talk to the participant after the session to get a better understanding of their anxiety and see if the participant would be comfortable talking during the next session.</li> </ul>   |
| Participants have difficulty reading   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Facilitators should read aloud the instructions for group activities so that all participants understand the tasks at hand and have an opportunity to ask questions.</li> <li>● Facilitators should know the limitations of group members, and participants with reading difficulties should be encouraged to participate in activities that do not require them to read aloud. Or just ask for volunteers.</li> <li>● Facilitators should do all or most of the reading aloud if it is determined that the majority of the group members have difficulty reading.</li> </ul>  |
| Participants form cliques  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seating arrangements can be altered periodically so that all participants have an opportunity to interact with, work with, and form relationships with different group members.</li> <li>● Facilitators may need to listen to the discussions that take place within cliques and tactfully point out similarities with the other group members to encourage group cohesiveness.</li> </ul>   |
| Participants take too long to complete an activity                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Facilitators should clearly articulate how much time participants have for tasks so that the depth of the discussions and work can be altered before participants need to participate in a larger group discussion.</li> <li>● During the group activity, facilitators should provide participants with a warning of how much time they have remaining so they can wrap up their activity before they need to rejoin the larger group discussion.</li> <li>● Facilitators should walk around the room during the activity to keep group members on task.</li> <li>● Participants do not appear motivated to participate</li> <li>● Facilitators should ensure that the participants understand the instructions for each activity by encouraging questions before the activity begins.</li> <li>● Facilitators should explain the objective of each activity so that participants understand the value of each one.</li> </ul> |
| Participants do not appear motivated to participate                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Facilitators should ensure that the participants understand the instructions for each activity by encouraging questions before the activity begins.</li> <li>● Facilitators should explain the objective of each activity so that participants understand the value of each one.</li> </ul>  |



## MANAGING DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES

During sessions, you will encounter participants with various tendencies that may affect group dynamics. Some participants may be quiet or outspoken, while some like to challenge others' perspectives. Cultural norms and language differences may affect these tendencies. For example, some parents may be more or less talkative or assertive because of cultural norms or because the session is being conducted in a language that is not their first language. In the parent program, you may find that differences in family backgrounds and parenting styles may also make some participants resistant to the material. For example, parents who do not allow their children to date may have a hard time accepting messages about youth susceptibility to teen dating violence. By considering diversity as a source of participant tendencies, you will be better prepared to handle difficult situations and engage all parents in the sessions. Some participant tendencies that can be particularly challenging and strategies for handling them are included in the table below.

| Complaining  |   |
|--|---|
| Challenging Behaviors  | Effective Strategies  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complainers tend to complain about a number of things.</li> <li>● Complainers tend to ramble and take the discussion off course.</li> <li>● It is not unusual for complainers to present situations or issues that are outside of the topic of discussion.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen, even though it may be difficult.</li> <li>● Acknowledge by paraphrasing the complaints.</li> <li>● DO NOT agree with the complaints.</li> <li>● Be prepared to interrupt and take control of the situation.</li> <li>● Use limiting responses that pin the complaints to specific things/behaviors.</li> </ul> |

| Indecisive   |   |
|--|---|
| Challenging Behaviors  | Effective Strategies  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When decisions must be made, even simple ones, indecisive participants can delay the process, and they may talk “around” an issue rather than stay on the topic of discussion.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bring issues out in the open and make it easy for participants to be direct.</li> <li>● Help the participant solve problems.</li> <li>● Watch for situations that may overload the participant, such as the pressure to make a decision.</li> <li>● Provide support after the participant finally makes a decision.</li> </ul> |

## Super-Agreeable

| Challenging Behaviors   | Effective Strategies  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Super-agreeable participants seem to agree with every point of view, but in many cases, they do not actually agree; rather, they are eager to please and reluctant to express their own views.</li> <li>● Super-agreeable participants tend to commit themselves to more than they can actually accomplish.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Make honesty non-threatening.</li> <li>● Do not allow them to make unrealistic commitments they cannot fulfill.</li> </ul> |

## Negative

| Challenging Behaviors  | Effective Strategies  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participants who are negative tend to object to everything and/or focus their attention and energies on the negatives. For example, they can always identify what is wrong with every situation and articulate why every strategy will be ineffective or impossible.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be patient and avoid getting drawn into the negative attitude.</li> <li>● DO NOT agree with them – when necessary make it okay to agree to disagree.</li> <li>● Disagree while respecting their perspectives.</li> </ul> |

## EXPERT

| Challenging Behaviors   | Effective Strategies  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Experts are participants who feel as if they know everything.</li> <li>● Participants who think they are experts may attempt to debate the accuracy of materials presented.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen to and acknowledge any concerns but avoid being a counter-expert.</li> <li>● Know your subject matter and use research evidence to support the strategies presented.</li> </ul> |

## SILENT-UNRESPONSIVE

| Challenging Behaviors  | Effective Strategies  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Silent-unresponsive participants answer all questions with a "yes" or "no" and are often the hardest in a group to read.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ask questions that cannot be answered with a yes or no response (i.e., open-ended questions), and then pause for long periods, inviting them to fill the void. This should be done carefully so as to not place them in an uncomfortable situation.</li> <li>● If the unresponsiveness becomes a problem in the group, discuss it one-on-one after the session.</li> </ul> |

| HOSTILE OR AGGRESSIVE   |  |
|---|--|
| Challenging Behaviors   | Effective Strategies   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hostile-aggressive participants will try to bully group members by being very critical of the content and the delivery of the program material.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Listen to and acknowledge any concerns but do not feel like every single piece of the program should be (or needs to be) justified.</li><li>● Know the subject matter and use research evidence to support the strategies presented.</li><li>● Stay positive and be assertive in responses by standing up for the program’s content and messages and speaking from your point of view without being threatening.</li></ul> |

We have come to the end of the first module of the HeaRT Facilitator Training. We have covered a lot of important information in this module. In order for you to become truly comfortable with the skills and information presented, you will need to practice, practice, practice! We cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you to try these tactics and become comfortable with them before your first session as a facilitator. You and your Coach will work through activities that will give you an opportunity to use the skills and tactics we have presented and prepare you to facilitate a group session effectively.



# Parent Program Module

## RUNDOWN OF THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT PARENT PROGRAMS

This module is designed to prepare you to be a facilitator for our 6th and 7th grade programs: HeaRT for Parents. While there is also an at-home program for parents of 8th graders - Families for Safe Dates - which we will briefly reference, this module focuses on preparing you for the programs you will be facilitating in person.

Your participation as a facilitator for the parent component of HeaRT is especially important because parents play such a critical role in influencing their children's behaviors. In this module, we will share big-picture highlights of the 6th- and 7th-grade programs. Your facilitator guide provides further details including in-depth information to help guide you through each session.

The parent component of HeaRT is broken down into grade-specific sessions with topics that are age appropriate.

**HeaRT for Parents (6th Grade)** is designed to help parents realize their message is important—that parents make a difference! It helps prepare them to communicate with their children about sex and healthy relationship development. It also gives parents guidance about how to help their children deal with all of the messages they receive about relationships and sex from their peers and the media. The guide for this program is called HeaRT for Parents Facilitator Guide (6th Grade).

- 6 group sessions
- Adapted from an existing evidence-based program (Parent's Make a Difference) to address dating violence
- Promotes positive parenting and effective parent-child communication on healthy relationship development and sexual health
- Supports parents in sharing their expectations and influencing their teens' decisions about dating and sexual behavior

**HeaRT for Parents (7th Grade)** continues to focus on positive parenting and effective communication between parents and children. It also teaches valuable skills for problem-solving, conflict resolution, and building healthy relationships. The guide for this program is called HeaRT for Parents Facilitator Guide (7th Grade).

- 3 group sessions
- 3 in-home, self-directed activities that allow parents to practice skills learned in the group setting with their children
- Supports parents in using positive parenting skills, open and effective communication, appropriate supervision, and conflict resolution

The **8th-grade program** for parents is called **Families for Safe Dates**. It is an established, evidence-based program that focuses heavily on specific attitudes and behaviors related to teen dating violence. Check out the [HeaRT website](#) for information on ordering these program materials and an implementation manual to help you work with parents.

- 6 booklets mailed to parents to complete at home
- Booklets help parents and teens explore different topics about dating violence together
- Evidence-based program that showed decreased risk of physical dating violence victimization

**HeaRT: Training for Parents** is a free, self-administered online training for parents and caregivers developed by CDC to ensure that all families have access to core content from the HeaRT parent programs at no cost. Schools and community organizations can promote the training for parents in addition to offering the in-person, facilitated programs or instead of those programs to reach as many families as possible.

## WHY ARE THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT PARENT PROGRAMS IMPORTANT?

Parents have a crucial role to play in preventing dating violence. The HeaRT parent programs provide parents of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders with skills that encourage positive interactions and communication with their children, including conversations about healthy, safe relationships. Open communication is a key takeaway in all of our parent sessions. This can never start too early, especially when there are so many opportunities for kids to get the wrong information from different sources.

The goal of the HeaRT parent programs is to reduce perpetration and victimization of violence in adolescence. This decrease results from changes in parents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, which, in turn, will have an effect on youths' attitudes and behaviors to prevent violence in adolescence. Specifically, HeaRT parent programs will:

- Improve parents' knowledge about unhealthy relationships and violence in adolescence.
- Change parents' attitudes to make them less accepting of violence in adolescence.
- Help parents understand the severity of violence in adolescence, their youths' susceptibility to it, and their role in prevention through positive parenting and modeling healthy relationships.
- Increase parents' belief that they can effectively prevent and respond to violence in adolescence.
- Enhance parents' skills and confidence in communicating with and building positive relationships with their children.

### Research shows that:

- When parents are supportive and involved, adolescents are more satisfied with the parent-child relationship and:
  - Engage in fewer sexual risk behaviors
  - Report having fewer sexual partners
  - Report using condoms more consistently (Dutra, Miller, & Forehand, 1999)
- Parent-child communication about sex encourages:
  - Later age for first sexual activity
  - Sexual abstinence
  - Increased partner communication
  - Safer sexual practices if sexually active (Miller, Levin, Whitaker, & Xu, 1998; Dutra et al., 1999)
- There is a direct correlation between positive parenting and reduced risk-taking behaviors.
- Consistent parent supervision is associated with increased abilities of their kids to handle everyday stressors in healthy ways. Being better able to adjust and adapt to life like this is also associated with:
  - Later initiation of sexual activity
  - Fewer sexual acts
  - More consistent condom use
- Greater parental supervision is associated with decreases in youth risk behaviors, such as:
  - Having sex at an early age
  - Smoking cigarettes
  - Drinking alcohol
  - Being physically aggressive
  - Skipping school
  - Engaging in teen dating violence (Forehand, Miller, Dutra, & Chance, 1997; Miller, Forehand, & Kotchick, 1999)
- Discussions are most effective if they happen BEFORE the adolescent begins dating and becomes sexually active (Miller et al., 1998)
- Adolescents who have discussions with parents are more likely to discuss risk with partners (Whitaker, Miller, May, & Levin, 1999)
- Peer norms that support adolescent sexual activity occur more often among adolescents who DID NOT have discussions with parents (Whitaker & Miller, 2000)
- Adolescents with correct knowledge about teen dating violence, HIV, and sexual risks are more likely to have had conversations with parents (Pick & Palos, 1995; Sigelman, Derenowski, Mullaney, & Siders, 1993)



By building parents' skills and self-efficacy for positive parenting and communication with their children, the HeaRT parent programs help participants develop supportive parent-child relationships and provide parents with a foundation for talking about a range of topics with their children, including difficult topics such as teen dating violence. In addition, if parents perceive that their children are vulnerable to teen dating violence and understand that their modeling of healthy relationships can help prevent teen dating violence, they will be more likely to act as healthy relationship models. Parent behaviors, along with increased knowledge and less favorable attitudes about teen dating violence, should positively affect youths' attitudes and behaviors related to teen dating violence.

---

## LEADING PARENTS THROUGH THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT

Many parent program facilitators will also be parents themselves. If you are not a parent, you should have some experience working with children. Teachers or other professionals with an understanding of children's issues are examples of individuals who can be good facilitators whether or not they are parents. It is also helpful if you live in or are familiar with the community you will be working in. Being part of the community helps to increase credibility with the parents and gives you insight into the barriers and challenges parents may be facing in their daily lives and in their community.

Ideally, two facilitators should work together to facilitate each group. When possible, we strongly suggest having facilitators of different sex. This approach provides different perspectives about parenting and allows for a richer experience. However, it is okay if your organization is not able to provide two facilitators, or if both facilitators are of the same sex. If there are two facilitators, you should equally share responsibilities for conducting the sessions, setting up the room, and preparing the materials needed for each session. Before each session, agree how to divide the responsibilities (e.g., who is going to lead which sections, and who will record participant responses). You and your co-facilitator should meet after each session to debrief and discuss what worked, what did not work, concerns raised during the session that you will address later, and strategies to improve facilitation in the next session.

### RECRUITMENT

Your community's Prevention Lead or Coach will determine who will be involved in parent recruitment. It may be you or your Coach or both of you. There are several ways to support recruitment efforts. Here are some strategies that may be helpful for creating interest in the HeaRT for Parents Programs:

- Mentioning the program at local events and meetings.
- Networking with partner organizations to solicit referrals.
- Posting flyers at your organization, in your neighborhood, or in public places near your home.
- Talking about the program with friends, relatives, or community members you encounter in your everyday life (e.g., at church, children's sporting events, the grocery store).

When you are creating buzz about the program in your community, make sure to describe the purpose of the program and the potential benefits to parents.

The programs can improve parenting skills, including communication and parent-child relationships; provide information about healthy relationships and teen dating violence; reduce the risk for teen dating violence victimization and perpetration; and other positive outcomes. For the latest research on the effects of HeaRT, check out the HeaRT website. Make sure to communicate clearly about the eligibility requirements for participation. Remember to recruit fathers also, as they play an important role in their children's understanding of healthy relationships. Finally, be sure to talk about any incentives that parents may receive for participating (e.g., gift card raffle).

You can also support recruitment by following up with recruited parents before the sessions begin. This contact is critical to help parents establish a relationship with you and to provide them an opportunity to ask questions and discuss any potential barriers to their participation (e.g., travel). Parents will be more likely to attend the sessions if you or other HeaRT staff can address any barriers to participation they may have prior to program facilitation.

Prior to each group session, facilitators should contact parents by phone or email to:

- Introduce yourself.
- Confirm their enrollment.
- Check on their transportation to get to the group.
- Determine whether they need childcare and, if so, the ages of their children.
- Remind them of the dates, times, and location of the sessions.

## STRATEGIES TO KEEP PARENTS COMING TO SESSIONS

For parents to benefit the most from HeaRT parent programs, they need to attend all in-person sessions. Facilitators have a key role in making sure that parents continue coming to sessions. There are some things you can do before and during program facilitation to strengthen attendance and engagement.

- **Make sure the right people are recruited and registered.** The ideal parents are genuinely interested in what you cover during the sessions; are concerned for their children's well-being; believe that the intervention will benefit their family; and have at least one child who is the age you are trying to reach (11 to 14 years old). Check the registration list ahead of time so you have information about the parents who will be attending the sessions.
- **Connect with parents.** The importance of establishing a genuine connection with parents cannot be underestimated. Build trust and rapport by showing genuine respect for their role as parents, acknowledging them as the experts on their children, and helping them to feel heard. Engage parents in the material by showing enthusiasm and ensuring that you meet their need for information and support.
- **Make it easy for people to attend.** Create an atmosphere that makes people want to come back. When necessary and possible, make arrangements for childcare, transportation, or both. Other examples of incentives for participation include gift cards or small prizes (e.g., note pads, water bottles). Hold sessions in the same location, at the same time, and on the same day each week if possible. At the end of each session, remind parents about the next meeting time to keep them thinking about the sessions. Remind parents to attend each week via phone, email, text, or social media.
- **Be organized and prepared.** Sessions should be well organized and easy to follow so that parents understand what they are doing and learning. This will help parents actively participate in the sessions and anticipate what will come next. You and your co-facilitator must plan sessions in advance and ensure that the room and materials are ready when parents arrive.
- **Deliver the sessions as designed.** If you deliver the program exactly as planned, the meaningful content and activities will help retention. Participants need to feel that they are truly gaining useful skills that are reinforced in a positive and productive manner.

## HOW TO MAKE UP MISSED SESSIONS

Parents who miss a session (and did not contact you before or immediately after the session) should be contacted afterward, as soon as possible (i.e., the same day or the next day) to let them know that they were missed. Try to find out why they missed the session. Parents usually miss a session for one of these reasons:

- **Unavoidable circumstances (e.g., emergency, illness).** Show your concern about their absence and make sure they plan to attend the next session.
- **Hardship (e.g., lack of transportation or childcare).** Determine if this was a one-time event or if it will continue to interfere with participation. If the issue will prevent the parents from participating, offer whatever assistance your organization is able to provide (e.g., parking or public transportation vouchers).
- **Discomfort.** Talk with the parent to understand their source of discomfort. As appropriate, determine what you can do to increase the comfort level. Help the parent understand that others in the group probably have similar feelings of discomfort and share the benefits of continued participation to encourage a return.

Parents who return to the program will need to learn what they missed. Share any homework assignments so they will be prepared for the next session. Offer participants a make-up session in one of the ways below. The detailed outlines are in the facilitator guide:

- Make up the session by joining a different group, preferably led by the same facilitators. Parents should return to their original groups for the rest of the sessions.
- Meet one-on-one with a facilitator to review what was in the missed session. Parents must do this before continuing on to the next session. On average, a one-on-one session make-up should take 30 minutes to an hour.
- You may add a group session if several participants have missed a session. This could be directly before the next session starts, if the facilitators can accommodate it.
- As a last resort, make-up sessions can occur over the phone or video chat. If participants want to view the videos or practice role-plays, they can do this at the next group session. You may want to share some program materials or information by email before the call, for reference, as well.

If participants are no longer interested in attending sessions and do not plan to return, thank them for participating and provide information on future opportunities to participate in HeaRT or referrals that may better meet their needs. Whenever possible, find out the reason for a participants' loss of interest in the program.

## PREP AND LOGISTICS

### Scheduling

Consider the organization's schedule when determining when to deliver HearT sessions, as well as other scheduling factors. HearT staff must also think about parents' schedules and school and community events or holidays that may reduce attendance at sessions. If most of the parents you are trying to reach work full-time, sessions may need to be outside of work hours (e.g., weekends, weeknights). When you schedule sessions, consider the time it will take for parents to get to the location. It may be helpful to involve parents in scheduling discussions and consider their input. If possible, coordinate with other community groups so that your sessions do not conflict with other events, such as:

- Religious services
- PTA meetings
- School open houses
- Town meetings
- GED classes
- 12-step meetings (e.g., Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous)
- Children's sports events

### Childcare

Parents often say lack of childcare is a reason that they cannot attend sessions. If your organization is able to provide childcare, that could increase participation in your program. Tell parents in advance whether childcare will be offered and let them know of any restrictions or exceptions, based on the child's age or any special conditions (e.g., wheelchair accessibility). Here are some considerations when thinking about providing childcare:

- Arrange for staff to care for children
- Arrange for additional facility space
- Plan for some type of entertainment or activity (e.g., movies, toys, coloring books) for the children
- Ensure that any shared toys or equipment are cleaned after each session

Occasionally, parents may want their children to attend the session with them. If it is not disruptive to their parents or the participants, infant children can remain with their parents. However, older children (two and up) should not be permitted to remain in the room during the session. It is important to establish guidelines and communicate them to parents before starting the sessions.

### Space Considerations

When you plan for space to deliver the sessions, you should only consider locations that are safe. It is also important to consider transportation parents will use to attend the sessions. If many parents will be driving, choose a location with enough parking and provide for any associated costs. If parents will be using public transportation, ensure that the location is convenient to bus or metro/subway stops. If participants will not be driving or using public transportation, assist in making transportation arrangements (e.g., carpools; taxis; relatives, neighbors, or friends who can provide transportation). Your Prevention Lead will decide ahead of time if program staff should offer transportation to participants.

Once you and your Coach have decided on a location, arrange the room in a way that encourages participation and ensures that sessions run smoothly. Here are some things to consider:

- Familiarize yourself with the space before the session starts (e.g., identify the location of outlets, bathrooms).
- Set up the room in way that facilitates conversation between you and parents and among parents themselves (i.e., semicircle, u-shaped, or around a single table).
- Select a place in the room so you can stand where all parents can easily see you.
- Place an easel with paper and markers near the front of the room (you may need to bring this with you).
- Place the projector and screen near the front of the room where everyone can clearly see the PowerPoint slides and videos.
- If possible, remove any items from the room that might be a distraction.

## Materials

As you learned in Module 1, preparation and engagement are key to successful facilitation. Be sure you have your facilitator guide on hand at all times. It will help you anticipate and answer any questions from the group. Your facilitator guide also includes useful session aids and icons to help you prepare and present information easily.

- **Session Overviews:** We organized the facilitator guide by session and each session is color coordinated with its matching session in the parent handbook. The first page of each session guide includes key material to help you prepare for the session. Here is an outline:
  - The first section describes the purpose of the session, the key goals you want to achieve during that session.
  - The second section includes key messages, or the essential “take-home” points for participants. It is important to reinforce these messages throughout the session.
  - The third section lists the materials you will use during the session and how to prepare them. It is important that you review each session closely prior to facilitation and prepare the necessary materials. Some materials (such as cut-out materials) need to be prepared well in advance of the session. Other materials could be prepared several minutes prior (such as preparing easel paper). Finally, the session overview details the time allotments for each part of the session.
- **Icons:** We use icons throughout the facilitator guide as visual aids to help guide you throughout each session.
- **Slides:** The facilitator guide contains information that appears on PowerPoint slides used in each session. These slides are available on the HeaRT Toolkit website along with the other program materials.
- **Posters (6th grade only):** We use posters to guide discussions for each session. There are printable version to hang in your meeting space. Copies of these posters are also available in your facilitator guide and parent handbooks for reference.

There is a list of materials you will need at the beginning of each session in the facilitator guide. It is critical that you review this list and make sure all materials are available and in working order before each session. In addition to materials on the list, you will need these available as well:

- A parent handbook for each participant
- An extension cord, if needed
- Extra pens or pencils
- Nametags

For sessions that include videos, you should preview the video before the session to make sure it is working properly and to familiarize yourself with the content so you can introduce it. Ideally, you should preview the video in the space where the group will be held to make sure all audiovisual equipment is in working order and any needed supplies (e.g., extension cords, computer, projector) are available.

Each session introduces a topic and includes at least one activity and a set amount of time for discussion. For all of your sessions, you will want to keep things moving along, keep your participants engaged, and be on the lookout for any challenges, such as one participant dominating the conversation, conversations that go off topic, or participants who show signs of distress.

This training manual goes through some session highlights for both the 6th- and 7th-grade programs, including a few sample session activities for practice. We will address key points of each session in this training manual (and the companion online training), but we do not cover everything. Refer to your facilitator guide for all the details. The facilitator guide has all of the information you need to be prepared, so remember to review it for a rundown of each session, including instructions for setup, guidance for activities, and key messages and learning objectives.



## LESSON 1: GEARING UP FOR THE 6TH-GRADE PROGRAM

### SESSION 1: PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE\*

#### Key Messages for Parents

1. Children and adolescents face many issues, such as early sexual activity, that can prevent them from being successful in life.
2. Children at this age are exposed to many messages about relationships and sex. They are starting to form their own beliefs. It is important for parents to have their own messages too.
3. Because children are exposed to relationship and sexual issues at an early age, parents must start addressing these issues with their children between the ages of 9 and 12.
4. Although many things influence children, parents can influence children and the decisions they make—Parents make a difference!

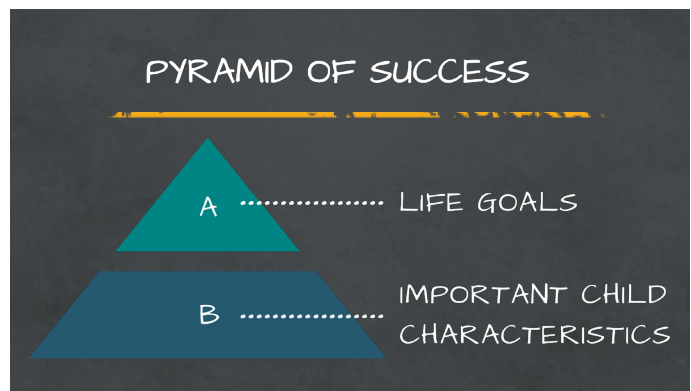
#### Session content covers:

- Understanding the purpose and goals of the intervention
- Icebreaker exercises to help establish group cohesion and a desire to continue in the program
- Introduction to the “Pyramid of Success” concept (what children need to achieve life goals)
- Issues pertaining to preadolescent and adolescent development
- Pressures children face in today’s society
- What parents can do to help their children confront these issues
- Why this intervention focuses on children between 9 and 12 years old
- The influence that parents have on their children
- Review of the rationale for this intervention

#### EXPLORE Session 1 Activity: Pyramid of Success

In Session 1, you will walk parents through building a Pyramid of Success for their children. The foundation of the pyramid symbolizes the personal characteristics a child needs to achieve success. The top of the pyramid symbolizes life's accomplishments or goals. While your facilitator guide will guide you on how to introduce the activity and lead a discussion with parents, take some time to familiarize yourself with the concepts by exploring the online options and creating your own Pyramid of Success. You will guide parents through this hands-on activity and will then briefly review the pyramid, making the following points:

1. Parents need to build a good foundation so that their children can reach their life goals.
2. Parents also need to equip children with the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices.
3. Sexual risk behaviors and engagement in unhealthy relationships can prevent children from succeeding.
4. Children at this age are exposed to many messages about relationships and sex and are starting to form their own beliefs.



\* Session 1: Parents Make a Difference was previously referred to as Session 1: Why do Parents Matter?.

## SESSION 2: PARENTING POSITIVELY

### Key Messages for Parents

1. Parents can strengthen the parent-child relationship through their attention to their child's positive behavior and by encouraging and spending time with them.
2. Parents can improve parent-child communication through listening, using open-ended questions, using “I” messages, and expressing openness to other viewpoints.
3. Parents should supervise children closely as they get older by knowing where they are going, who they will be with, and when they will be home.

### Session content covers:

- Icebreaker exercise to prepare parents for active participation in the group
- Effective parenting practices
- Strengthening the parent-child relationship
- Improving parent-child communication
- Communication role-plays
- Supervision of children

## SESSION 3: PARENTS ARE EDUCATORS

### Key Messages for Parents

1. Children are at risk for sexual health problems.
2. Parents are in the best position to be their children's most effective relationship and sex educator.
3. Parents can promote healthy relationships and sexual health in their children by
  - Being knowledgeable, approachable, and understanding
  - Talking with their children
  - Modeling sexually healthy attitude
  - Communicating sexually healthy values

### Session content covers:

- Icebreaker to further solidify group cohesion
- The realities of adolescent relationships and sexual behaviors
- Why parents should be relationship and sex educators
- Sex education information
- What parents can do to help their adolescent become sexually healthy

### EXPLORE Session 3 Activity: Why Should I Worry?

In Session 3, you will guide a discussion with parents about the realities of adolescent relationships and health. Place the following questions and answers on cards and put them in a box. Parents will draw the cards, read the questions aloud, and have the other parents guess the answers. Your facilitator guide will walk you through how to introduce the activity and lead a discussion with parents. Read the questions and answers below to familiarize yourself with the facts. The answers might surprise you.

| Teen Relationship and Sexual Behaviors Q & A   |   |
|--|---|
| • Q: How many out of 10 high school students report having sex?                      | • A: 3 in 10 high school students report having sex. (CDC, 2024)  |
| • Q: What percent of teens did not report using a condom the last time they had sex? | • A: 48%—Almost half of sexually active high school students report they did not use a condom the last time they had sex. (CDC, 2024) |
| • Q: What ages do children begin dating?   | • A: On average, children begin dating at 12 1/2 for females and 13 1/2 for males. (AAP, 2009)  |

You will guide parents through this discussion and then briefly review the importance of parents, making the following points:

- Parents are important relationship and sex educators for their children
- The concerns voiced are some of the reasons that parents must be relationship and sex educators for their children
- It is common for children to ask their parents questions about relationships and sex
- It is also common that parents often do not know what to say

## SESSION 4: I THINK I CAN, I KNOW I CAN

### Key Messages for Parents

1. Talking to children about sex is difficult but important.
2. Parents need to be aware of their own expectations and behaviors regarding relationships and sex and how they are communicated to their children.
3. There are seven tips that parents can use to talk with their children about relationships and sex:
  - Be prepared
  - Relax
  - Start now!
  - Listen to your child
  - Continue to talk about relationships and sex
  - Use the Facts + Expectations formula
  - Accept your child

### Session content covers:

- The difficulties of discussing relationships and sexual issues with your children
- Five tools for parents to use to talk with their child about relationships and sex
- Figuring out what to say
- When to say what

## SESSION 5: PARENTS ARE ROLE MODELS

### Key Messages for Parents

1. Children at this age begin to learn the skills needed to create and foster positive relationships.
2. Parents are in the best position to be their children's most effective relationship educators.
3. Parents can promote healthy relationships in their children by:
  - Being knowledgeable, approachable, understanding, and respectful
  - Modeling healthy relationships
  - Communicating self-respect
  - Focusing on the positive
  - Discussing alternatives for dealing with frustration and anger
  - Taking advantage of teachable moments

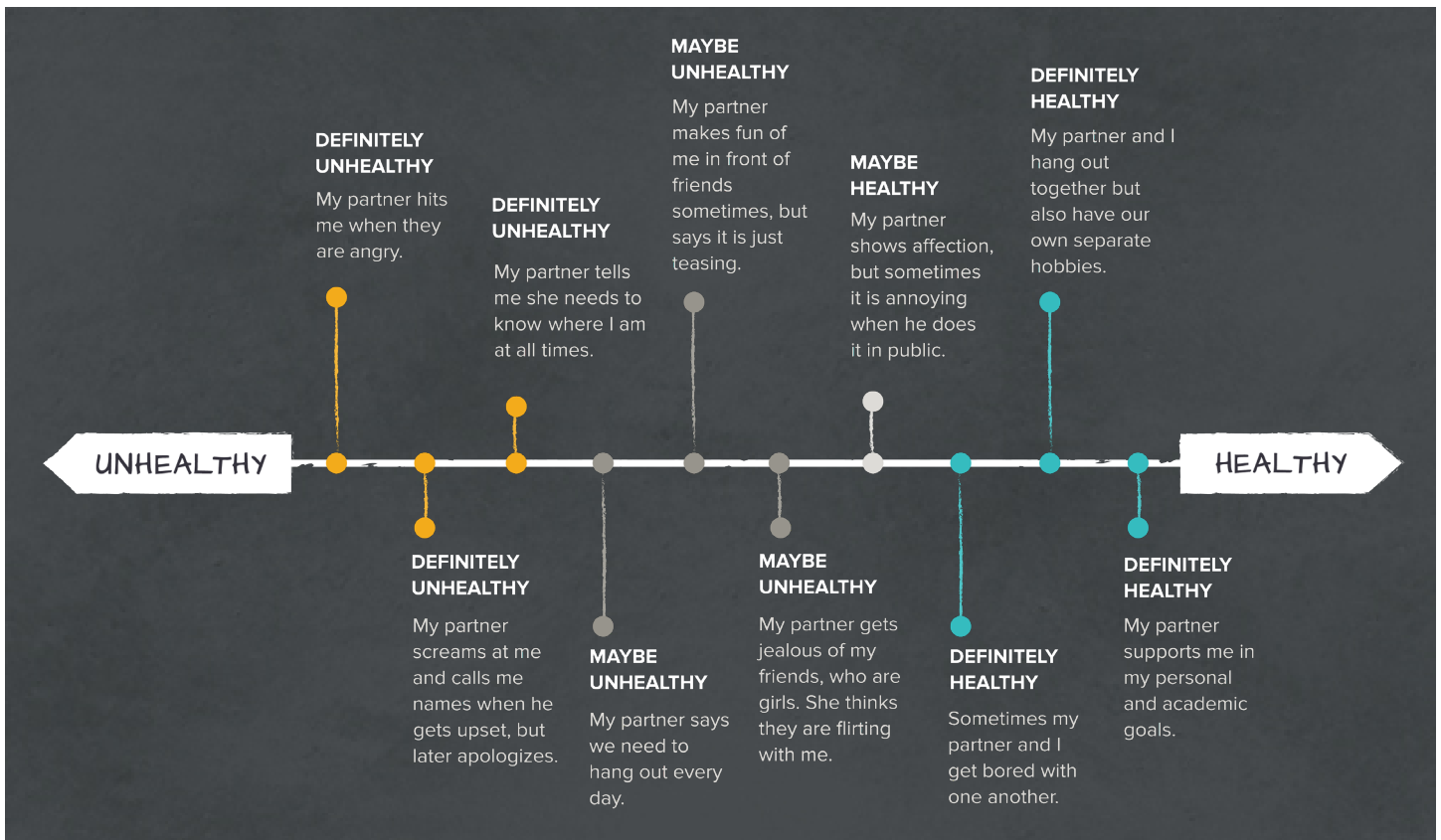
### Session content covers:

- Icebreaker exercise to prepare parents for active participation in the group
- Understanding healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Realities of unhealthy relationships
- Parents as relationship and sex educators
- What parents can do to help their children have healthy relationships

### EXPLORE Session 5 Activity: Understanding Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships

In Session 5 you will spend time with parents trying to better understand relationship behaviors that fall along a continuum (or a line) with “healthy” at one end and “unhealthy” at the other end. We use the concept of the continuum because situations are not always black and white and some relationship behaviors may not always be clearly healthy or unhealthy. The continuum helps us understand the gradual transition that can occur when we go from healthy to unhealthy behaviors.

| Characteristics of Healthy Relationships   | Characteristics of Unhealthy Relationships   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both partners feel equal power</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Open and honest communications</li> <li>• Respectful interaction styles</li> <li>• Space to pursue individual interests</li> <li>• Appropriate boundaries</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One or both partners feels disempowered</li> <li>• Absence of trust</li> <li>• Poor communications</li> <li>• Partners are disrespectful to one another</li> <li>• Not enough space is given to pursue individual interests</li> <li>• Boundaries may be overstepped/disregarded</li> </ul> |



| Healthy-Unhealthy   | Answer               |
|---|----------------------|
| My partner supports me in my personal and academic goals.                                   | Definitely Healthy   |
| My partner and I hang out together but also have our own separate hobbies.                  | Definitely Healthy   |
| Sometimes my partner and I get bored with one another.                                      | Definitely Healthy   |
| My partner shows affection, but sometimes it is annoying when he does it in public.         | Maybe Healthy        |
| My partner gets jealous of my friends, who are girls. She thinks they are flirting with me. | Maybe Healthy        |
| My partner makes fun of me in front of friends sometimes, but says it is just teasing.      | Maybe Healthy        |
| My partner says we need to hang out every day.  | Maybe Healthy        |
| My partner tells me she needs to know where I am at all times.                              | Definitely Unhealthy |
| My partner screams at me and calls me names when he gets upset, but later apologizes.       | Definitely Unhealthy |
| My partner hits me when they are angry.   | Definitely Unhealthy |

## SESSION 6: MOVING FORWARD

### Key Messages for Parents

1. Parents must remember the importance of good communication skills.
2. Parents must remember that peer pressure becomes a greater influence as children get older.
3. A four-step parenting plan for peer pressure is helpful.

### Session content covers:

- Icebreaker exercise to prepare parents for active participation in the group
  - Understanding healthy and unhealthy relationships
  - Realities of unhealthy relationships
  - Parents as relationship and sex educators
  - What parents can do to help their children have healthy relationships
-

## LESSON 2: GEARING UP FOR THE 7TH-GRADE PROGRAM

HeaRT for Parents (7th Grade) is a combination of both classroom and at-home sessions, three of each. Many of the concepts presented in these sessions will reinforce what parents learn in the 6th-grade program, but with more specifics on dating and teen dating violence. Sessions two, four, and six are all at-home activities so we won't feature them in our video highlights, but we will still give you a brief overview of the sessions and key messages. The 7th-grade program also kicks off with Parenting Positively followed by the added at-home session.

### SESSION 1: PARENTING POSITIVELY

#### Key Messages for Parents

1. Adolescence is a time of many changes in a child's life, and it is important for parents to understand those changes and the ways they affect their child's behaviors, preferences, and interaction styles.
2. Children face a lot of pressures during adolescence, and if they give in to those pressures, they may not be able to achieve their goals in life.
3. Positive parent-child relationships can be formed if parents notice and praise good behavior, respect their children's opinions, make an effort to spend time with their children, openly communicate with their child, and appropriately supervise and implement rules.

#### Session content covers:

- Introduction of the HeaRT for Parents (7th Grade) program
- Create general ground rules and icebreaker activity
- Changes and pressures children face as they get older
- Positive parenting skills
- Parent-child communication skills

#### EXPLORE Session 1 Activity: Communication Blockers Activity

In Session 1, you will walk parents through an activity to help them understand that how they say things can enhance or limit communication with their child. The outcomes of a conversation can be very different depending on whether responses are "Road Blocks," which can be harmful or counterproductive, or "Building Blocks," which can bridge misunderstandings or build relationships. Your facilitator guide will walk you through the activity. To familiarize yourself with the concepts now, read the examples below and see how differences in delivery could affect the outcomes of a conversation.

This exercise shows parents the value in praising their children's positive behavior, respecting their opinions, and being an active listener.

| Road Blocks   | Alternatives  | Building Blocks  |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>You cross your arms, tap your foot, and stand in front of your child, glaring at them.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nonverbal communication here is in a critical manner and the message the parent is trying to get across is unclear and confusing.</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When talking or listening to your child, it is best to maintain an open posture (e.g., open arms, body facing child, eye contact).</li> <li>If you are upset about something, verbally express that by saying, "I am very upset right now."</li> </ul> | <p><b>I love you and feel very sad when you say that!</b></p> <p>Use "I" messages to communicate how you feel to your child.</p>   |
| <p><b>If you do not study, you do not get to use the car this weekend.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although there is nothing wrong with the statement per se, the communication is not really clear. The child does not know exactly what or how much they need to study to get to use the car.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you study for your math test and get at least a B, you can use the car this weekend. I know you can do it!</li> </ul>   | <p><b>What can I do to help you with this tough decision?</b></p> <p>Parents should not act as if they have all of the answers. The parent acknowledges that this is a tough decision for the child.</p>   |
| <p><b>You think your teacher is bad—let me tell you about my boss!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your child wants you to listen. They do not want their problems minimized.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It sounds like you are having a tough time. Tell me more about it.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>You sound very angry with her. What happened?</b></p> <p>Using open-ended questions will bring out more information from the child.</p>  |
| <p><b>Can you tell me what happened?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child can simply say "yes" or "no." Leave off "can you," and it is a building block.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell me what is going on.</li> <li>Tell me what is bothering you.</li> <li>What happened?</li> </ul>   | <p><b>I know I can trust you—you have good judgment.</b></p> <p>The parent is praising the child and allowing them to be independent in making the decision.</p>   |
| <p><b>You think you have it bad; you do not know the half of it. When I was your age, I had to buy my own car and pay for everything myself.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid negating the child's experiences—their experiences should matter and are just as relevant as yours.</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It sounds like you are having a tough time. Tell me more about it.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>You sit next to your crying child, place your hand on their back, and then you say, "Why are you crying?"</b></p> <p>Using open-ended questions will bring out more information from the child. The nonverbal cues (sitting next to the child and putting a hand on their back) also lets the child know you care.</p> |



| Road Blocks   | Alternatives  | Building Blocks  |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>We will see about the concert on Saturday—<br/>I need to think about it. You did not go where you were supposed to go the last time you went to a concert.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stick to the present issue. Children make mistakes, and they do not need you constantly reminding them about the last mistake they made.</li> <li>• If you are going to mention past mistakes, limit them to situations for growth and problem solving. For example, you might say, “Last time you did... Please let me know what you will put in place this time to prevent it from happening again.”</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let me think about the concert on Saturday. I will let you know by Wednesday.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Why is that important to you?</b></p> <p>Using open-ended statements or questions will bring out more information from the child.</p>  |
| <p><b>That is a really dumb way to think.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criticizing children will make them resent talking to you and avoid talking to you or sharing information with you in the future.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That is interesting. Why do you think that?</li> </ul>                                   | <p><b>I really wish I knew what to tell you.</b></p> <p>Parents are not supposed to know everything, and it is OK to acknowledge to your child that you do not know what to say.</p> |

## SESSION 2: LET'S TALK, PART 1 (IN-HOME)

### Home Session Activities

#### Activity 1: Using Words of Encouragement and Praise

**Goal:** For the parent to practice using words of encouragement and praise with their child

#### Activity 2: Starting a Conversation

**Goal:** For the parent and child to practice using good communication by talking about everyday stuff

## SESSION 3: PARENTING BY EXAMPLE

### Key Messages for Parents

1. Characteristics of healthy dating relationships are:
  - A balance of power and the presence of trust
  - Open and honest communication
  - Respectful interaction styles
  - Space to pursue interests
  - Appropriate boundaries
  - Unhealthy dating relationships may be lacking one or more of these characteristics
2. Teen dating violence is a serious problem and teens are at risk for experiencing it, irrespective of their race, sex, or socioeconomic status.
3. Parents can help prevent violence in adolescence by educating their children about the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships, maintaining open communication, and acting as positive relationship models.
4. Parents are important for teaching children appropriate relationship skills and expectations for relationships.

### Session content covers:

- Review of Session 1 concepts and the parents' experiences with the home session
- Healthy versus unhealthy relationship behaviors
- Teen dating violence
- Parents as relationship models

### EXPLORE Session 3 Activity: Healthy or Unhealthy?

In Session 3, you will teach parents how to distinguish healthy relationship behaviors from unhealthy behaviors—just like in the 6th-grade program. You will give parents cards with scenarios, then spend time reading them together to decide if the parents in the scenarios are modeling healthy or unhealthy relationship behaviors. You will discuss what was OK and not OK (and why) about each of these and ways the parents could model more healthy relationship behaviors for their children. Your facilitator guide will walk you through how to perform the activity and lead a discussion with parents. Familiarize yourself with the concepts and read the statements below. Choose if the behavior is healthy or unhealthy, or maybe even both.

| Relationship Scenario  | Healthy? Unhealthy? Or Both?   |
|--|--|
| 1. Anthony and Carla have been married for 15 years and have two children. Within the last year, they have begun to bump heads on a number of different issues. They do not argue or raise their voices at each other in front of their children. Instead, they wait until the children go to bed, and they quietly address their conflicts. One day while Carla is preparing breakfast for the children, Anthony comes into the kitchen and says he is late for work and may miss a meeting. After Anthony goes out the door, Carla says under her breath, "If your boss ever realizes what a loser you are, he will fire you." | <p><b>Healthy</b>—don't argue or raise voices in front of children, address conflicts in private.</p> <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—partners are disrespectful of one another (talking badly about one partner under her breath)</p> |
| 2. Troy and Carrie have three small children. Over the course of their marriage, Troy has been increasingly concerned with knowing where Carrie is, who she is with, and what she is doing. Troy calls Carrie at least twice an hour, and if he cannot reach her, he calls her friends or family to locate her. As a result, Carrie has few friends and does not go out of the house often.  | <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—not enough space is allowed to pursue individual interests (emotional violence)</p>  |
| 3. Monique has been divorced for several years and recently started dating a man from the neighborhood named Sam. She has two children who live with her. One day while they are watching TV with the children, Monique receives a call from one of her friends from childhood, Jason. When she finishes her phone call, Sam demands to know who she was talking to and says that she must be cheating on him with Jason. When Monique explains that Jason is just her friend, Sam shoves her into the wall and leaves.  | <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—controlling behavior (demanding to know who was on the phone), absence of trust (says Monique must be cheating), physical dating violence (Sam pushes Monique into wall)</p>                           |
| 4. Jabar and Alex have been together for 23 years and have five children ranging in age from 8 to 18. Jabar and Alex both care for their children and alternate responsibility for various aspects of the household (or which children to assign such tasks to), such as taking the children to after-school activities, doing laundry and dishes, taking out the garbage, etc. They have weekly family meetings where they allow their children to express any concerns they have and resolve any conflicts that may have arisen over the previous week.  | <p><b>Healthy</b>—shared responsibility; partners are respectful of each other; equal power</p>  |
| 5. Chris and Taylor are divorced but they have a preteen daughter, Shyla. Shyla often skips school, runs away, and has been caught shoplifting. Chris and Taylor often disagree about how to parent Shyla and have frequent arguments about this. Taylor regularly tells Shyla that if it were not for her, she and Chris would probably still be married.   | <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—emotional violence (Taylor toward Shyla); as long as arguments about how to parent Shyla are not in front of Shyla, it is ok – parents will have arguments</p>   |
| 6. Jack and Michelle share custody of their children and alternate weeks in which they care for the children. One day when Jack drops off the children at Michelle's apartment, he notices that there is a man sitting in the living room. Michelle introduces this man as her new boyfriend. Jack asks to talk to Michelle outside and says that he is concerned about having someone he does not know spend time around the children. Michelle calls her boyfriend outside and tells him that Jack thinks he should not be trusted around her kids and that maybe he will mistreat them. The two men scuffle, and Jack leaves. | <p><b>Healthy</b>—Jack speaks to Michelle in private; no indication of unhealthy behaviors around the children</p> <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—boundaries overstepped/disregarded (Michelle seems to cause this scuffle)</p>       |
| 7. Tami and Jordan have three children. They make it a point not to fight in front of their children, but they often do not say anything to each other for days. The older child also often hears their parents arguing in their bedroom and notices that Tami and Jordan call each other bad names during their arguments.  | <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—poor communication (parents not speaking to each other for days at a time is just as unhealthy as parents arguing in front of children); partners are disrespectful of each other</p>                  |

| Relationship Scenario   | Healthy? Unhealthy? Or Both?   |
|---|--|
| <p>8. Eva is a single mother of three teenage daughters. Over the last several years, Eva has had several partners who have lived in her home. Eva's daughters have seen these men hit their mother, and Eva always has an excuse for their behavior. In one instance, Eva said she provoked the man because she accused him of talking to another woman. In another instance, she said the man was stressed because of his job and was just not himself. The girls heard the man tell their mother, "I love you so much; you just make me so angry sometimes." In yet another situation, Eva said that it was an accident and that the man did not really mean to hit her.</p> | <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—witnessing physical dating violence &amp; mother making excuses for behavior; mother likely does not feel power in the relationship</p>  |
| <p>9. Jayda and Hines have lived together for six years and have a 6-year-old son and a 2-year-old daughter. Jayda comes home from work one day and yells at Hines telling him that the concert he was supposed to get tickets for is now sold out. Hines is angry and yells back at Jayda. The children witness the argument. Later in the evening, Hines apologizes to Jayda for forgetting, and Jayda apologizes to Hines for getting angry.</p>   | <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—poor communication (parents yelling at each other)</p> <p><b>Healthy</b>—parents apologize to each other &amp; children witness conflict resolution</p>  |
| <p>10. Demetrius is a single father of three young children. The mother of his children has a substance use problem and rarely sees the children. Demetrius has a serious girlfriend but she does not like his children and the two have frequent arguments about what Demetrius should do regarding behaviors of his children. It is not uncommon for Demetrius's girlfriend to hit him and tell him that he is a horrible father and that he will never get another woman because of his three children.</p>  | <p><b>Unhealthy</b>—physical dating violence (girlfriend hits Demetrius); partners are disrespectful (girlfriend is disrespectful of Demetrius); emotional violence (girlfriend telling Demetrius he is a horrible father)</p> |

## SESSION 4: LET'S TALK, PART 2 (IN-HOME)

### Home Session Activities

#### Activity 1. Starting a Difficult Conversation

**Goal:** For the parent to practice using good communication skills and opening the lines of communication to talk about difficult topics

#### Activity 2: My Child's Relationships

**Goal:** For parents to take an objective look at their child's relationships to determine if their child is at risk of being a person who experiences or perpetrates violence

## SESSION 5: PARENTING SKILLFULLY

### Key Messages for Parents

1. Parental supervision is essential to prevent children from engaging in risky behaviors with negative long-term consequences.
2. Parents should supervise their child's online activities as diligently as they supervise their in-person activities.
3. Conflict is inevitable, especially during teen years, but parents can use skills that will assist in quickly resolving conflicts with their children.

### Session content covers:

- Review of Session 3 concepts and the parents' experiences with the home session
- Parental supervision
- Risky behaviors during the teen years
- Conflict resolution

### EXPLORE Session 5 Activity:

#### The 4-Step Plan to Resolve Conflicts

Conflict between parents and children throughout life is inevitable but may peak or become worse during the teenage years. The key to limiting conflict during this time is to use good communication skills when conflict occurs and to understand that sometimes there is give and take required from the parent and the child. In Session 5, you will present parents with the 4-Step Plan to Resolve Conflicts. Your facilitator guide will walk you through how to present the information to parents, but to familiarize yourself with the four steps, read through the steps below.

#### Step 1: Define the Issue or Problem

Both parent and child express their views about the problem

Use good communication skills

- Use "I" messages.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Summarize what is said.

#### Step 2: Discuss Possible Solutions

Both suggest solutions to resolve the conflict

- Listen to each other's solutions without interrupting or becoming defensive.

#### Step 3: Choose and Implement a Solution

Evaluate both suggestions

- Choose one option on which both can agree and implement.

#### Step 4: Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Solution

Reevaluate the solution and problem after some time has passed.

## SESSION 6: LET'S TALK, PART 3 (IN-HOME)

### Home Session Activities

#### Activity 1. Starting a Difficult & Personal Conversation

**Goal:** For the parent to practice using good communication skills and opening the lines of communication to talk about difficult topics

#### Activity 2: Myth or Fact

**Goal:** For the parent and child to have an opportunity to talk and dispel myths related to pressures that teens face

#### Activity 3: Adult and Community Responsibility for Preventing Problem Behaviors in Adolescents

**Goal:** For parents to understand what they can do to prevent teen dating violence

## LESSON 3: INTERCEPTIONS AND POST GAME RECAP

In the online training, you saw some great examples of our 6th- and 7th-grade sessions in action, highlighting a few of the topics you will be exploring with your parents. Remember, parents of 8th graders will benefit from the additional Families for Safe Dates program content. See your Coach for more information if you will be implementing Families for Safe Dates.

As a HeaRT facilitator, you will be responsible for teaching each session to program participants and creating a safe and accepting learning environment just as you have seen Aimee and Mauro do in the interactive scenarios.

Parenting during the teenage years is a challenging time. Kids are seeking independence yet still need guidance and a sense of security. In addition to the typical hurdles parents face during these years, there are more outside influences on kids than ever before, many of which can be harmful if they are not addressed quickly or appropriately.

The journey on which you are about to embark as a facilitator of HeaRT for Parents is extremely important. The strategies, tips, and life skills from the trainings that you share with parents will pave the way for a better and healthier future for themselves, their teens, and their entire families. You should also know that facilitating the sessions and being a facilitator is a two-way street! You will learn so much from the parents in your sessions as well. Parenting is anything but a one-size-fits-all approach, so a communication strategy that may work for one parent in the training may not work for another.

#### Facilitation Checklist for Each Session:

- Keep your facilitator guide handy
- Keep track of time
- Keep sessions moving along
- Debrief with your Coach following each session to discuss what worked and what didn't

## INTERCEPTIONS: POTENTIAL CHALLENGES WITH PARTICIPANTS

| Challenge   | Your Response  |
|---|--|
| <b>Interception #1: My Kid's Too Young to Play</b><br><br>How do you handle a parent who thinks she doesn't need to participate in HeaRT because her child is too young to date?  | It's never too early to open the dialogue about dating and healthy relationships with your kids, especially because healthy relationships aren't only about dating! They're about friendships and interactions with family, teachers, and lots of people. Good communication is necessary in all of these relationships. |
| <b>Interception #2: Sideline Coaching</b><br><br>How do you respond to a parent who questions whether you are qualified to lead HeaRT, especially if you aren't a parent yourself? Watch to learn how to deal with this common challenge. | I understand your concern, but I have worked with kids in a professional capacity, so I'll be able to give you a different perspective that may be helpful.  |
| <b>Interception #3: Teammate in Trouble</b><br><br>What do you do when a parent displays signs of extreme distress during a session? Watch to learn how to handle this particularly challenging situation.                                | Let the person in distress know you are going to help her and give her additional resources following the session. Ask if she would like to step into the hallway with the other facilitator for a moment if she needs a break.  |

Your Coach has important activities for you to complete before your first session. They will help you facilitate a practice session and help refine your skills. Also, use this time to ask your Coach any remaining questions you may have.



# Youth Program Module

## LESSON 1: RUNDOWN OF THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT YOUTH PROGRAMS

This module is designed to prepare you to be a facilitator for HeaRT for 6th and 7th graders. During your training, we will share big-picture highlights of the 6th- and 7th-grade programs and show you some classroom sessions in action. Your facilitator guides provide further details about the programs as well as in-depth information to help guide you through each session.

We base the HeaRT comprehensive violence prevention model on these three important facts:

1. Dating violence has negative effects on the mental and physical health of youth, as well as on their school performances.
2. Violence in an adolescent relationship sets the stage for problems in future relationships, including intimate partner violence and sexual violence perpetration and/or victimization throughout life.
3. Early intervention is needed to stop violence in youth relationships before it begins and keep it from continuing into adult relationships.

As a facilitator for the HeaRT youth programs, you will play one of the most important roles in the program because you will be working directly with young teens during a critical time in their lives. You will provide middle school youth—ages 11 to 14—with the knowledge and skills they need to have healthy, safe relationships before they start dating. Research shows that supporting healthy emotional development can prevent a variety of negative outcomes, including teen dating violence (Durlak et al., 2011). Research also shows that healthy relationship attitudes and behaviors start developing early (Cohen et al., 2005).

### WHY ARE THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT YOUTH PROGRAMS IMPORTANT?

All of the HeaRT programs are research-based and theory-driven. They focus on social and emotional learning to help teens identify the qualities of healthy relationships, learn to be better communicators, and keep their emotions in check, ultimately avoiding behaviors that could lead to teen dating violence. You can feel confident knowing you are delivering information about how to prevent teen dating violence based on the latest science and research.

Understanding what is typical among middle schoolers is important for several reasons. You will be interacting with middle school youth each day in the classroom. This period of development is characterized by significant psychological and biological changes, so being familiar with typical development will give you a sense of how most middle schoolers think and act. In addition, dating begins during these years. The youth programs focus on preventing teen dating violence and promoting healthy relationships. Understanding typical behavior and development will give you a developmentally sensitive lens about dating, peer, and other relationships.

Relationships in middle school may be quite brief, perhaps a few days (although some are longer). Couples usually do not go out on a date as a twosome, and they may not even go anywhere. The relationship may be at school only or online. Initial dating is closely tied with peer relationships. Early on, dating emerges from mixed-sex peer groups. In this way, youth may be a couple within a larger group of boys and girls. Additionally, the emotional quality of dating relationships is similar to close same-sex friendships at this age. What characterizes middle school relationships are fun and excitement, as compared to emotional closeness and commitment.

These early dating relationships play an important role in overall development both during adolescence and into adulthood. Youth (preteens and teens) spend a significant amount of time thinking about, talking about, and participating in dating relationships (Furman, 2002). In fact, research indicates that female teens attribute 34% and male teens attribute 25% of their strong feelings to actual or fantasized romantic relationships. These percentages are higher than those of any other topic, including family, school, and friends! Although dating is not the only thing on youths' minds, it certainly is at the top.

Healthy dating relationships can help teens develop and practice interpersonal skills, communication and negotiation skills, and empathy—all skills needed to develop long-term, committed relationships in adulthood. Additionally, although breakups may put some youth at risk for depression, they may also help youth develop the emotional resiliency and coping skills they need to handle difficulties later in life. Healthy relationship skills developed through early dating experiences can carry through adulthood.

## GETTING TO KNOW THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT YOUTH PROGRAMS

The youth component of HeaRT is broken down into grade-specific sessions with topics that are age appropriate. We designed the youth programs for schools, but they can also be used by community organizations working with youth. Below are brief summaries of the HeaRT programs for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. While we give a brief overview of the 8th-grade program, Safe Dates, this module focuses only on the 6th- and 7th-grade programs developed by CDC. For more information about Safe Dates, talk to your Coach or visit the website mentioned under the program description below.

**HeaRT for 6th Graders** is designed to set the stage for youth to begin thinking critically about the qualities and behaviors that contribute to healthy and safe relationships. It will help youth learn how to manage their feelings and use healthy ways to communicate. It also explores the qualities of what it means to be a good friend. Your guide for this program is the HeaRT for 6th Graders Facilitator Guide.

- (7) 50-minute sessions
- Focuses on healthy relationships with friends, family, or in the context of dating
- Teaches social and emotional skills, such as identifying emotions and coping with feelings
- Promotes and builds healthy relationship skills, such as communication and conflict resolution
- Discusses ways to help and support friends in unhealthy relationships

**HeaRT for 7th Graders** reinforces the main concepts from the 6th-grade program but also goes deeper into relationship dynamics and the risk factors that can lead to teen dating violence. Youth will explore the qualities of healthy friendships even further and begin to connect those qualities to dating. They will learn more about setting ground rules and expectations in relationships as well as the meaning of consent. They will also learn how to identify trusted and safe adults they can talk to if they are in danger and need to confide in someone. Your guide for this program is the HeaRT for 7th Graders Facilitator Guide.

- (7) 50-minute sessions
- Reviews and builds on skills taught in the 6th-grade program
- Increases focus on dating relationships and sexual violence
- Addresses social norms about substance use

The **8th-grade program**, called **Safe Dates**, is an established, evidence-based program that focuses heavily on specific attitudes and behaviors related to teen dating violence. For information about accessing Safe Dates facilitation materials, see the [HeaRT website](http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/safedates.page).

- 10 sessions plus a play and poster contest
- Evidence-based program for preventing teen dating violence perpetration and victimization
- Research showed sustained effects at four-year follow-up
- To learn about Safe Dates, visit: <http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/safedates.page>

## LESSON 2: LEADING STUDENTS THROUGH THE YOUTH PROGRAMS

### SESSION OVERVIEW

The 6th and 7th grade sessions cover many topics and provide opportunities for youth to learn and enhance skills. However, these programs are intended to become more than the sum of their parts—they will motivate youth to make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of their peers and dating partners.

The format of the sessions takes into consideration different learning styles. The HeaRT youth programs use a mixture of information sharing, review, discussion, role-plays, and paired and group exercises that use both verbal and visual (e.g., newsprint) techniques. You are encouraged to rephrase messages and questions in several different ways to communicate with your youth in the way they prefer.

Program outlines are below, followed by a session-by-session overview of each session's key messages, purpose, and facilitation challenges and tips. You will notice that Sessions 1-5 cover similar topics in each grade. Sessions 6 & 7 differ across the programs, so each grade will have its own section for those sessions.

|                  | DM for 6th Graders               | DM for 7th Graders  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Session 1</b> | Healthy Relationships            | Healthy Relationships                                     |
| <b>Session 2</b> | Understanding Feelings           | Understanding Feelings                                    |
| <b>Session 3</b> | Staying in Control of Feelings   | Staying in Control of Feelings & Making Healthy Decisions |
| <b>Session 4</b> | Healthy Communication            | Healthy Communication                                     |
| <b>Session 5</b> | Unhealthy & Unsafe Relationships | Unhealthy & Unsafe Relationships                          |
| <b>Session 6</b> | Staying Safe in Relationships    | Sexual Violence & Dating Safety                           |
| <b>Session 7</b> | HeaRT Rewind                     | Relationship Rights and Getting Help                      |

## GETTING TO KNOW THE SCHOOLS

Some communities may be able to have teachers within the schools facilitate HeaRT. However, due to time constraints and competing demands, sometimes other organizations will need to bring in outside health educators to facilitate the sessions. In this case, facilitators will be responsible for communicating with schools on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, it is critical that facilitators understand school dynamics in order to work effectively within them.

One aspect of schools is the culture or climate. Just like people, each individual school has its own personality. Often the principal sets the tone for the atmosphere in the school. Some principals have a “top down” approach and do less delegation to assistant principals and other school staff. Other principals often delegate to other staff, and prefer to be involved only as needed. Schools can have turnover in administrative positions over the course of implementing HeaRT. As key staff change, it will be important to meet with those individuals to familiarize them with the model and secure their support for continued implementation.

A second important issue is when and how to best contact schools/school employees. We suggest minimizing contact with schools at certain times like the beginning and end of the school year. Schools are very hectic, especially in the first two weeks of the term. They typically finalize their rosters around day 20. So, things start to settle down by week four as new youth are integrated and routines are established. Similarly, the last few months of school are also hectic. Practice for testing may start as early as February. When trying to reach teachers, consider their schedules. Good times to reach them by phone are typically 10 to 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the school day, immediately after school ends, or during their planning period. It is easy to reach some teachers by email but consider sending them a text message if your emails go unanswered.

A third important consideration is to demonstrate respect for the various requirements and demands that schools face. Although the school may be highly supportive of HeaRT, there are other pressures that may need to take priority at times. It may be necessary to wait to talk to the assistant principal or to come back, even if there was a scheduled appointment, due to school administration’s need to address a pressing issue. The HeaRT youth programs, while clearly important and intended to have positive effects on youth, are only one of many things that take place in schools on a daily basis. Showing understanding and respect for these issues will ultimately promote positive ties with schools.

## MANAGING A ROOM FULL OF MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

### Proactive Behavior Management

Be proactive and prepared for sessions to encourage appropriate classroom behaviors and prevent problem behaviors. The proactive strategies below can help minimize the likelihood that behavioral issues will occur. It is important to remember the following:

- **Prepare thoroughly.** Facilitators who really know the session material and are comfortable with it will be able to spend more time interacting with youth. Being prepared before youth come into the room allows you to greet them and set the tone for the session. It is also important that you prepare needed materials before the session begins to minimize disruptions during the session.
- **Establish routines.** It is important for youth to understand

#### Strategies for Success

- Be prepared.
- Establish routines.
- Manage transitions.
- Praise positive behaviors.
- Praise the opposite.
- Be aware.

what you expect of them. Work with them to set group agreements and remind them of these rules regularly during facilitation. In addition, the “question of the day” will be part of the routine and can help focus youth on the session by engaging them as soon as they arrive to the classroom. You may also want to consider establishing a routine of asking a youth volunteer to help pass out pens/pencils, scrap paper, or youth handbooks.

- **Manage transitions.** Many behavioral issues emerge during transition times (e.g., when youth enter the classroom; when shifting from a discussion to a small group activity). Providing additional structure during transition times can minimize disruptions. In addition, if relevant, you should work with the teacher whose classroom you are using to ensure that the “passing of the reins” is smooth and efficient and does not result in unstructured time for the youth.
- **Praise positive behaviors.** Consistently praise youth when they are behaving appropriately. You can direct this praise at the entire class or individual youth. Praise should be behaviorally specific. For example, rather than saying “good job,” say, “I like the way you provided an example of a healthy relationship behavior.” Praise

can also be nonverbal, such as a smile or eye contact. Additionally, you can use small prizes or incentives (like healthy treats) to praise youth participation or on-task behavior. The classroom teacher may be helpful in identifying positive reinforcement strategies to which the youth respond well.

- **Praise the opposite.** Praise behaviors that are the opposite of the undesired behaviors. For example, if a youth has a tendency to whisper to friends during sessions, “Catch the person being good” when they are being quiet. For example, say, “I like the way that you are listening when others are talking.”
- **Be appropriately assertive and specific when giving directions.** Youth will be more likely to behave well when they know what the facilitator expects from them. You should speak calmly, assertively, and clearly so they know what is expected. For example, rather than “You need to get up,” say “I need for each of you to stand up and face the blackboard.”
- **Be aware.** Maintain a heightened awareness of all actions and activities in the classroom. Facilitators who move around the classroom and put themselves in proximity to possible trouble spots can resolve minor disruptions before they evolve into larger problems. In particular, pay extra attention to possible problems during transitions and when you are discussing sensitive topics.
- It is important that facilitators provide structure, are **clear about classroom expectations, and follow through with consequences for breaking ground rules.** At the same time, it is important to be friendly, use humor from time to time, and convey a positive attitude. By striking this balance, you will demonstrate to youth that you are in charge and are warm and positive.
- **Instruct students to raise their hands before talking.** Sometimes discussions can get off track when too many people talk at the same time. Let them know that you expect them to raise their hands before talking. This allows everyone a chance to speak.

## Managing Misbehavior

Occasionally, problem behaviors will occur despite the best preparation and proactive behavior management strategies. It is middle school, after all. You should talk with the classroom teacher before facilitation about effective strategies to use as well as strategies to avoid. The specific response will vary depending on school policy and any discussions you have had with the classroom teacher. It is critical to decide before facilitation what recourse to take when problem behavior occurs. For example, if you need to remove someone from the class, where and to whom should they be sent? It is important to have a broad repertoire or “toolbox” of different strategies to use, such as the following:

- **Ignore more minor behaviors,** such as giggling. Often students are used to getting attention in this way.
- **Stay calm. Students’ misbehavior can be stressful.** Misbehavior can be stressful. However, it is extremely important for you to stay calm and not raise your voice. Ahead of time, think about what strategies are most useful for you personally to stay calm. For example, pay attention to your body—when you feel stressed, what part of your body gets tense? Taking a deep breath can help you stay calm.
- **Be on the alert for students who are prone to being disruptive.** While circulating around the room, spend relatively more time in proximity to such youth. Consider separating those who are being disruptive together.
- **Use the school’s standard attention signal (e.g., holding two fingers in the air) if one exists.** If the school does not have one, it would be useful to identify one that can be used and communicate this signal to the youth. Examples include clapping hands, turning the lights on and off, or giving a particular hand signal.
- **Pose a request or question.** If someone is off task (e.g., talking with someone else), it can be useful to deliberately engage them in the session material. For example, during a class discussion, ask the youth for their thoughts on the topic.
- **Have a behavior management system for students needing to be removed from the classroom.** It may be necessary to set up some type of system that identifies when you need to remove someone—for example, “three strikes and you’re out.” As part of initial discussions with the classroom teacher, identify what strategy she or he uses. However, talk to your Coach before implementing such a system.

## Managing Specific Types of Behavior

While delivering sessions, youth will sometimes exhibit behaviors that could potentially affect facilitation. Here are some of these behaviors with suggested responses:

- If a someone complains about activities or attempts to steer the conversation outside of the topic:
    - Although it may be difficult, listen to what they are saying
    - Acknowledge by paraphrasing the complaints and focus on alternative, positive views to reframe and redirect the discussion
    - Do not agree with the complaints
    - Be prepared to interrupt and take control of the situation if the youth cannot be redirected
  - If someone identifies what is wrong with scenarios and why strategies are not going to work
    - Avoid getting drawn into the youth's attitude
    - Do not agree with the youth; when necessary make it okay to agree to disagree
    - Disagree while respecting their perspectives
    - Be patient
  - If a youth attempts to debate the accuracy of materials:
    - Know the subject matter
    - Listen to and acknowledge what the youth says
    - Avoid being a counter-expert
  - If a youth attempts to bully you or others or is overly critical of the content or delivery:
    - Stay calm
    - Without being threatening, be assertive about the need for everyone to be treated respectfully
    - Stay in control; if necessary, remove them from the classroom. Remind them of the Group Agreements before re-admitting them next session
    - Stay positive
-

## GROUP AGREEMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

You play an important role in creating and maintaining a sense of trust and safety in the classroom. One major way this occurs is through the group agreements that you develop in the first session. Due to the sensitive nature of the material discussed in HeaRT, there are **three rules**:

1. Confidentiality – In order to respect the privacy of others, implement a “no name” rule when discussing personal issues about others OR oneself. Insist that people say, “I know someone who...”
2. Inform participants of your status as a mandatory reporter. The group agreement may be that if someone tells you that someone is harming them or they are harming someone else, **YOU WILL HAVE TO REPORT IT.**
3. Respect – All group members should respect each others’ opinions and agree to disagree.

More information about the rationale for these rules is included in Session 1 of both programs. It is important that you ask for input from youth as you develop additional group agreements, as this will increase buy-in. If youth do not mention the following rules, you should consider adding them to the list developed:

- Arrive on time.
- Participate in class discussion and activities.
- Emphasize that although discussion is very important, there may be times when you will have to limit the length of discussions so that you can cover all of the material in the session.
- Everyone deserves to be heard. Emphasize that this means a commitment to not interrupting others when they are speaking.
- Stay on task.
- Emphasize the variety of activities in HeaRT: sometimes youth will be up on their feet; sometimes they will be working alone or in small groups.
- Ask questions.
- Have fun!

You can remind everyone of the group agreements throughout the sessions and when difficulties first arise in order to minimize escalation of problems. Despite the use of proactive behavior management strategies, if problems continue, you should ask your Coach for input and guidance.

Your behaviors can also affect the safety and trust in the classroom. Here are guidelines to follow:

- Do not force youth to answer questions if they appear or say that they are uncomfortable.
- Be respectful of varying levels of comfort with sexual content.
- Take action if someone discloses being a person who has experienced or perpetrated violence.

Remember that the 6th- and 7th-grade programs contain a lot of content that is repeated across years in order to reinforce those important lessons and skills. When the sessions contain some unique key messages or content, they are separated below, and those unique aspects are highlighted.



## SESSION 1: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS (6TH & 7TH GRADES)

Session 1 for 6th- and 7th-grade sets the tone for creating a comfortable learning environment for youth and introduces them to the purpose and goals of HeaRT. The discussions and activities focus on identifying the ingredients of healthy relationships and understanding what school and community resources are available. This session lays the groundwork for youth to think about what qualities they seek out in both friends and dating partners.

### Key Messages for Youth

1. The purpose of HeaRT is to explore ways to have healthy and safe relationships with others (including peers, friends, and dating partners).
2. Healthy relationship skills with friends and others will help youth have healthy and happy relationships with the people they date, both now and in the future.
3. If youth have a question or concern about any type of relationship, they should talk to the facilitator or one of their “go-to” trusted adults.
4. There are “ingredients” (or qualities) we look for in all types of relationships, like healthy communication and trust.
5. Youth do not have to be currently dating someone or have ever dated someone to think about how they want to be treated by a dating partner (boyfriend or girlfriend). In fact, it is useful and important for youth to think about these things before they get involved with someone.

### Session content covers:

- Providing youth with an understanding of the purpose and goals of HeaRT
- Establishing a comfortable, non-threatening learning and sharing environment that will encourage continued participation
- Providing youth with school and community resources (trusted adults) that the youth can access if they have questions or concerns about any type of relationship
- Exploring qualities of a healthy friendship
- Connecting qualities of a healthy friendship to that of a healthy dating relationship

## SESSION 2: UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS (6TH GRADE)

Session 2 of the 6th-grade program focuses on feelings and builds on the information discussed in Session 1. We have designed the session to build youths’ ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions in a healthy and safe way.

### Key Messages for Youth

1. Identifying and understanding feelings is important in making and keeping healthy and safe relationships.
2. All feelings are important! It is normal and expected to experience a wide range of feelings.
3. Sometimes uncomfortable feelings (e.g., fear) help us recognize when we are in danger or need help. These feelings may make us feel badly at the time, but in the long run can help keep us safe if we respond in a healthy way.
4. Our bodies give us physical clues (physiological and body language clues) to let us know how we are feeling.
5. We can guess how someone may be feeling by using body language clues. However, the best way to find out how someone is feeling is to ask them.
6. Sometimes it is normal and expected to experience multiple feelings at the same time, such as feeling both excited and nervous.

### Session content covers:

- Promoting emotional literacy, including the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions/feelings in a healthy and safe way
- Building feelings vocabulary. The development of a large feelings vocabulary makes it possible for youth to better understand and communicate their emotional experiences
- Explaining and reinforcing the concept that there are no “wrong” feelings—it is normal and expected to experience a wide range of feelings
- Discussing the physical (physiological and body language) clues associated with angry and calm feelings
- Practicing using body language clues to identify others’ feelings
- Discussing situations that lead to feeling multiple ways at once

## SESSION 2: UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS (7TH GRADE)

Session 2 of the 7th-grade program introduces the concept of emotional literacy or how youth can identify, understand, and respond to their emotions in a healthy and safe way. Youth will develop a large “feelings vocabulary” and understand how these words can be used to communicate their feelings effectively.

### Key Messages for Youth











1. Identifying and understanding feelings is important in making and keeping healthy and safe relationships.
2. All feelings are important! It is normal and expected to experience a wide range of feelings.
3. It is normal and expected to sometimes experience multiple feelings at the same time, such as feeling both excited and nervous.
4. Sometimes uncomfortable feelings (e.g., fear) help us recognize when we are in danger or need help. These feelings may make us feel badly at the time, but in the long run can help keep us safe if we respond in a healthy way.
5. Our bodies give us physical (physiological and body language) clues to let us know how we are feeling.
6. When our feelings are in control and we are not thinking clearly, it is harder to act in a healthy and safe way.
7. Four steps can help us stay in control of feelings and think more clearly:
  - When your body sends you a strong emotion, PAUSE!
  - Name your feeling.
  - Pick the best way to calm down (and do it!)
  - Check in with yourself. How are you feeling now?

### Session content covers:

- Promoting emotional literacy, or the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions/feelings in a healthy and safe way
- Building youths’ feelings vocabulary. The development of a large feelings vocabulary makes it possible for youth to better understand and communicate their emotional experiences
- Explaining and reinforcing the concept that there are no “wrong” feelings—it is normal and expected to experience a wide range of feelings
- Discussing situations that lead to feeling multiple ways at once
- Discussing the physical (physiological and body language) clues associated with angry and calm feelings
- Discussing potential consequences of letting feelings taking control
- Discussing the four steps to staying in control of feelings

## EXPLORE Session 2: Feelings Charades Activity

In Session 2, you will walk youth through an activity to help students understand how they can use someone else's body language as clues to identify that person's feelings. Identifying and understanding how someone else may be feeling is very important in making and keeping healthy relationships. Your facilitator guide will walk you through how to perform the activity and lead a discussion with youth, but to familiarize yourself with the concepts, click through the feelings cards below to see examples of feelings and matching body language.

| Facial Expression<br>or Body Language | Feeling   | Facial Expression<br>or Body Language | Feeling   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Happy                                 |    | Relaxed                               |    |
| Sad                                   |   | Surprised                             |   |
| Angry                                 |  | Nervous                               |  |
| Scared                                |  | Confused                              |  |
| Tired                                 |  | Excited                               |  |

### SESSION 3: STAYING IN CONTROL OF FEELINGS (6TH GRADE)

This session builds on Session 2 and provides strategies for youth to identify when they are having strong feelings and how to manage them effectively. Youth will also learn ways to calm down, including deep breathing, positive self-talk, engaging in physically active or rewarding activities, and talking to someone they trust.

#### Key Messages for Youth

1. When feelings are not in control and we are not thinking clearly, it is harder to act in a healthy and safe way.
2. It is never okay to use violence, regardless of how strong feelings may be.
3. Four steps can help us stay in control of feelings and think more clearly:
  - When your body sends you a strong emotion, PAUSE!
  - Name your feeling.
  - Pick the best way to calm down (and do it!)
  - Check in with yourself. How are you feeling now?
4. Four calming skills youth can use are deep breathing, positive self-talk, doing something physically active, and talking to someone they trust.
5. If youth are concerned about their safety or health, or have trouble calming down or thinking more clearly, they should talk to someone they trust.

#### Session content covers:

- Continuing to promote youths' emotional literacy, including the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions/feelings in a healthy and safe way
- Establishing the link between physical clues, strong feelings, and unclear thinking
- Discussing potential consequences of letting feelings take control
- Emphasizing that it is never okay to use violence, regardless of how strong feelings may be
- Discussing and practicing the four steps to staying in control of feelings
- Discussing and practicing four ways to calm down

### SESSION 3: STAYING IN CONTROL OF FEELINGS & MAKING HEALTHY DECISIONS (7TH GRADE)

Session 3 of the 7th grade program continues to build emotional literacy, and presents ways youth can identify, understand, and respond to their emotions in a healthy and safe way. The discussion and activities in this session focus on the long-term health consequences of underage alcohol consumption and myths or common misconceptions that many teens have about alcohol and drug usage among their peers. Youth will also learn ways to calm down, including deep breathing, positive self-talk, engaging in physically active or rewarding activities, and talking to someone they trust.

#### Key Messages for Youth


1. Two things can help youth to make healthy, safe decisions: calming down before acting and not assuming to know exactly what others are doing (not believing myths or perceptions).
2. Four calming skills they can use include deep breathing, positive self-talk, doing something physically active or relaxing, and talking to someone they trust.
3. If they are concerned about their safety or health, or have trouble calming down or thinking more clearly, they should talk to someone they trust.
4. Drinking alcohol during the teen years can lead to learning problems or alcohol dependence (alcoholism).
5. Regardless of what they assume, most middle schoolers are not drinking alcohol, using other drugs, or having sex.

#### Session content covers:

- Continuing to promote emotional literacy, including the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions in oneself and others in a healthy and safe way
- Discussing and practicing four ways to calm down
- Discussing how drinking alcohol during the teen years can lead to learning problems or alcohol dependence
- Demonstrating that the norm for youth behavior is often far different from youth perception
- Providing youth with the fact that most middle schoolers are not drinking alcohol, using other drugs, or having sex


### EXPLORE Session 3: Deep Breathing Practice

In Session 3, you will guide youth through a deep breathing exercise as an example of a healthy way to calm down. Staying in control of feelings is important because it is easier to think clearly and communicate in a healthy way with others when we are calm. Your facilitator guide will walk you through how to introduce the activity, but to familiarize yourself the exercise, follow the instructions for deep breathing with Coach DM in the next slides.




## LET'S PRACTICE...

First, get into a comfortable sitting position. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor.



Now, put one of your hands just above your belly button and the other on your chest.

- When you breathe in, the hand on your belly should move up - like a balloon expanding.
- When you breathe out, it should move down - like a balloon contracting, or getting smaller.
- The hand on your chest should stay still. This means we are breathing correctly.
- Try taking five slow breaths this way.



## SESSION 4: HEALTHY COMMUNICATIONS (6TH & 7TH GRADES)

Session 4 of the 6th- and 7th-grade programs introduces two components necessary for healthy communication—feeling heard, understood, and respected by the other person; and needing to be able to listen, understand, and respect what the other person is saying. The discussion and activities in this session demonstrate how verbal (what we say) and nonverbal (facial expressions, body language) communication skills affect healthy communication, teaching youth how to have more positive conversations with others.

### Key Messages for Youth

1. Healthy communication means:
  - We feel heard, understood, and respected by the other person.
  - We need to be able to listen, understand, and respect what the other person is saying.
2. Healthy communication skills consist of both nonverbal (messages we send with our bodies and facial expressions) and verbal skills (what we say and how we say it). Our verbal and nonverbal communication should match!
3. Healthy communication skills can help youth have more positive conversations with others and help them handle conflicts or problems with others appropriately.
4. Conflicts happen! We cannot avoid them. If we choose our words and actions carefully, we can resolve conflicts without hurting others.

### Session content covers:

- Increase awareness about nonverbal and verbal communication and teach basic skills for improving conversation
- Allow youth time to practice the use of healthy nonverbal and verbal communication skills

## SESSION 5: UNHEALTHY AND UNSAFE RELATIONSHIPS (6TH & 7TH GRADES)

Session 5 of the 6th- and 7th-grade programs promote awareness of unhealthy and unsafe relationship behaviors, including teen dating violence. The discussion and activities in this session focus on the broad range of unhealthy behaviors and how to identify when an unhealthy behavior (“yellow light”) crosses the line and become unsafe (“red light”). This session also identifies what types of relationships can be affected by unhealthy behaviors and when it is important to seek help from a trusted adult.

### Key Messages for Youth

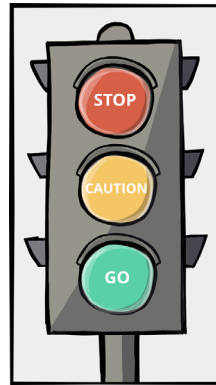
1. Teen dating violence—which consists of physical, sexual, and emotional violence, as well as stalking—is a type of unhealthy relationship in which behaviors have crossed the line and are unsafe.
2. Teen dating violence is a serious problem and youth are at risk for experiencing it, regardless of their race, sex, or socioeconomic status.
3. If youth or someone they know is being violent or is the person experiencing violence, they need to get help from a trusted adult.
4. The violence someone experiences is never the fault of the person experiencing violence.

### Session content covers:

- Increasing youth awareness of unhealthy relationship behaviors
- Educating youth about teen dating violence, including providing definitions and facts about physical, sexual, and emotional violence, as well as stalking
- Discussing when unhealthy behaviors (“yellow light behaviors”) cross the line and become unsafe (“red light behaviors”)
- Emphasizing that unsafe (“red light”) behaviors include behaviors that fall within the category of teen dating violence and require seeking help from a trusted adult

### EXPLORE Session 5: Red - Yellow - Green Light Activity

In Session 5, you will walk youth through the “Red - Yellow - Green Light” activity that will get them thinking about the differences between healthy, unhealthy, and unsafe behaviors. Your facilitator guide will walk you through how to introduce the activity with youth. To familiarize yourself with the concepts, complete the activity below and indicate whether these are red, yellow, or green light behaviors.



**Red Light:** Red light means that the behavior is both unhealthy and unsafe. That is, it has crossed the line. In these situations, you would tell your friend or sibling to get help from a trusted adult to end the relationship and make sure they are safe. You would help them find someone to talk to if your friend or sibling did not know where to turn.

**Yellow Light:** Yellow light means that the behavior is worrisome—it is unhealthy, but at this point has not yet crossed the line to be unsafe. In these situations, you would tell your friend or sibling that they have a few options: (1) your friend could use healthy communication skills to express what they are feeling and thinking, or (2) your friend or sibling may also want to talk to a trusted adult. If these behaviors continue and make your friend feel uncomfortable or unhappy, they have probably crossed the line to red light behaviors.

**Green Light:** Green light means that the behavior is healthy and is a go.



## SESSION 6: STAYING SAFE IN RELATIONSHIPS (6TH-GRADE)

Session 6 of the 6th-grade program introduces youth to the concept of RESPECT ME Rights. This session identifies the way youth should expect to be treated and how they should treat others in a healthy and safe relationship. In addition, community and national resources are provided to youth and discussed.

### Key Messages for Youth

1. RESPECT ME! We all have rights in our relationships that outline how we expect to be treated respectfully by others and how others have a right to be treated respectfully by us. In the HeaRT youth programs, we call rights in dating relationships RESPECT ME Rights.
2. Individuals at school and within the community, as well as national resources, can answer youth questions about relationships and help them protect themselves or help a friend in need.

### Session content covers:

- Discussing RESPECT ME Rights, which highlight major program themes and messages as they pertain to dating relationships
- Providing youth with school, community, and national resources (trusted adults) that they can access if they have questions or concerns about any type of relationship
- Discussing why it can be hard for teenagers to get help if they are in an unhealthy or unsafe relationship, and providing youth with tips on how to help a friend in need and how to leave an unsafe relationship

## SESSION 6: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND DATING SAFETY (7TH-GRADE)

Session 6 of the 7th-grade program focuses on the nature of sexual coercion and the importance of consent in sexual relationships. In addition, we discuss tips for dating safety, and we use example situations.

### Key Messages for Youth

1. One form of sexual violence is sexual coercion. This involves using pressure (like asking over and over again) or alcohol or drugs to get someone to do something sexual that they do not want to do.
2. In a sexual situation, consent means that all people involved agree to and are comfortable engaging in a specific sexual behavior (e.g., touching, kissing, sex).
  - If someone gives consent to one sexual behavior (e.g., kissing), it does not mean that they are willing to do anything else.
  - Only “yes” means “yes.”
  - It is your right to decide if and when you engage in a specific sexual behavior. You have the right to change your mind.
3. Although youth do not have control over what other people do (including whether someone will engage in an unhealthy or unsafe behavior), there are some things that youth can do to help keep themselves safe or potentially avoid a situation that could turn unsafe.

### Session content covers:

- Providing a definition for and discussing sexual coercion, or the use of pressure or alcohol/drugs to get someone to do something sexual that they do not want to do
- Reinforcing the fact that sexual coercion is a form of sexual violence
- Emphasizing that sexual consent must be clear, continuous and free from coercion, and all people must be conscious
- Discussing dating safety, or things that youth can do to help keep them safer when dating
- Prompting youth to identify potentially unsafe dating situations and apply dating safety tips

## EXPLORE Session 6: RESPECT ME Rights Activity

In Session 6 of the 6th-grade program and Session 7 of the 7th-grade program, you will introduce youth to RESPECT ME Rights, which detail the rights that everyone has in relationships and how physical, sexual, and emotional dating violence breaks these right. Your facilitator guide will walk you through this activity, but to familiarize yourself with the concepts now, read the RESPECT ME Rights below and scroll over the letters to reveal what each right looks like when it is being respected and why it is important.

**R**

*I have the right to REFUSE to do anything I believe is wrong or makes me uncomfortable.*

What does it look like when someone is respecting this right? Your partner does not pressure you to do things that you don't want to do. Why is this right important? It is important to trust your instincts – sometimes people call this their guts or a little voice in their heads. If you feel uncomfortable about doing something, listen to that feeling. We tell young kids that it is an “uh oh” feeling. Teenagers and adults should listen to the “uh oh” feeling, too.

**E**

*I have the right to have and EXPRESS my own thoughts and feelings in a healthy, safe way.*

What does it look like when someone is respecting this right? Your partner shows interest in your thoughts and feelings by actively listening (e.g. asking questions, taking turns talking); your partner tells you that they are interested in what you have to say.

**S**

*I have the right to feel SAFE, free from physical, sexual, or emotional harm.*

Why is this right important? We have a right to feel safe – in person, on the phone, and online—and others have a right to feel safe around us. Everyone deserves to be in healthy, safe relationships. Healthy relationship ingredients do not include physical, sexual, or emotional violence.

**P**

*I have the right to say "no" to any kind of PHYSICAL contact, including sex. It does not matter if I have done anything sexual in the past with this person or someone else.*

Why is this right important? Any type of sexual violence is unsafe and unacceptable, even if it happens only once. No one has the right to force or talk you into sexual contact – it does not matter if you have done anything sexual in the past.

**E**

*I have the right to my own personal or EXTRA space.*

What does it look like when someone is respecting this right? Your partner encourages you to have other friends, spend time with your family, and do activities that you enjoy. Your partner does not stop you from being friends with certain people or threaten to break up with you if you talk to someone else. Your partner does not “smother” you with text messages, phone calls, or in-person visits.

**C**

I have the right to *CHOOSE* my own friends.

Why is this right important? Balance is important in any relationship. It is important to have friends outside of your partner so that you have other people to spend time with, and you can feel well-rounded and happy. If your partner wants you to give up all of your friends or family so that you can be with them, this is a warning sign of a potentially unhealthy and/or unsafe relationship.

**T**

I have the right to *TALK* to a trusted adult about my relationships.

Why is this important? Relationships are complicated, and it can be helpful to have the support of someone who can help you think through situations and who can answer your questions. Trusted adults can help you think about how you can stay safe and help keep your friends safe, too.

**M**

I have the right to make *MISTAKES*, as everyone makes mistakes from time to time.

Why is this important? No one is perfect, and no one is perfect in relationships. You will probably get into conflicts or disagreements with friends and dating partners at one point or another; you may find yourself in situations where feelings have taken control. Maybe you were not thinking clearly, and maybe you said something you later regretted, or maybe you failed to use a healthy communication skill (for example, you jumped to conclusions or blamed someone for something they did not do). How you respond to these mistakes is very important. It is important to take steps to use healthy communication skills and talk through the problem.

**E**

I have the right to *END* a relationship.

Why is this important? You have the right to end a relationship for any reason. Ending the relationship safely is especially important if you or your partner is being hurt.

## SESSION 7: HeaRT REWIND (6TH-GRADE)\*

- Youth present or perform their interpretation of RESPECT ME Rights
- Complete any unfinished session activity from previous sessions
- Discuss the topics written down in the Parking Lot

## SESSION 7: RELATIONSHIP RIGHTS AND GETTING HELP (7TH-GRADE)

As mentioned above, Session 7 of the 7th-grade program introduces youth to the concept of RESPECT ME Rights. This session identifies the way youth should expect to be treated and how they should treat others in a healthy and safe relationship. Additionally, we provide and discuss community and national resources.

### Key Messages for Youth

1. RESPECT ME! We all have rights in our relationships that outline how we expect to be treated respectfully by others and how others have a right to be treated respectfully by us. In HeaRT, we call rights in dating relationships RESPECT ME Rights.
2. Individuals at school and within the community, as well as national resources, can help answer questions about relationships and help youth protect themselves or help a friend in need.

### Session content covers:

- Discussing RESPECT ME Rights, which highlight major program themes and messages as they pertain to dating relationships
  - Providing youth with school, community, and national resources (trusted adults) that they can access if they have questions or concerns about any type of relationship
  - Discussing why it can be hard for teenagers to get help if they are in an unhealthy or unsafe relationship, and providing them with tips on how to help a friend in need and how to leave an unsafe relationship
  - Allowing youth to interpret RESPECT ME Rights via presentation or performance
- 

\*Session 7: HeaRT Rewind was previously referred to as Session 7: Dating Matters Rewind.

## LESSON 3: INTERCEPTIONS AND POST GAME RECAP

In the online training, you saw some great examples of our 6th- and 7th-grade sessions in action, highlighting a few of the topics you will be exploring with your youth. Remember, in 8th grade, youth will benefit from the additional Safe Dates program content. See your Coach for more information if you will be facilitating Safe Dates.

As a HeaRT facilitator, you will be responsible for teaching each session to your youth and creating a safe and accepting learning environment, just as you have seen Aimee and Mauro do in the interactive scenarios.

Working with middle schoolers can be exciting and unpredictable, especially given the nature of this subject matter. The material is sensitive and can be highly emotional, and youth will be sharing personal information about dating, sexuality, and family relationships. Occasionally, you may need to manage behavior while teaching. You will set some boundaries with youth so things don't get too personal. Remember, you are neither their friend nor their therapist. You can help youth by giving them appropriate resources within the school or community should they need extra help. Remember, you can always go to your Coach if you need help managing class dynamics or behavior.

If you will be working with youth in a school setting, it is a good idea to observe the class and talk with the teacher prior to your first session to get a better sense of classroom dynamics. It may be helpful to have the teacher remain in the room during your sessions to manage any behavior issues that may come up.

### Facilitation Checklist for Each Session:

- Keep your facilitator guide handy
- Keep track of time
- Keep sessions moving along
- Debrief with your Coach following each session to discuss what worked and what didn't

## INTERCEPTIONS: POTENTIAL CHALLENGES WITH PARTICIPANTS

You will cover a lot of ground in HeaRT. We don't anticipate that you'll encounter too many problems in your sessions, but we think it's worthwhile to go over some common challenges along with strategies on how to handle them... just in case.

Some of these challenges may include youth who show signs of distress, those who question why they are taking the training, those who take a session off topic, or youth who dominate the conversation.

| Challenge   | Your Response   |
|---|---|
| <b>Interception #1: Bad Sportsmanship</b><br><br>How do you handle a someone who thinks he doesn't need to participate in HeaRT because he isn't dating?                        | Healthy relationships are not just about having a boyfriend or girlfriend – healthy relationship behaviors are necessary in every type of relationship, even friendships. |
| <b>Interception #2: Player Down</b><br><br>How do you address a youth who shows signs of distress during a HeaRT session?   | Let the person in distress know you are going to help her and give her additional resources following the session.  |
| <b>Interception #3: There's No "I" in Team</b><br><br>What should you do when someone tries to take the session off course?   | Tell them that they are taking the class off topic and needs to stay focused. Redirect them back to the session material  |
| <b>Interception #4: Yellow Flag Penalty</b><br><br>What should you do when someone makes comments that suggest people who experience violence are to blame for their own abuse? | Explain that it is never someone's fault if they are victimized in a relationship or otherwise. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.                             |

---

We have covered a lot in this training, because there is so much for youth to learn during this challenging stage of life.

The journey you are about to take with them is incredibly valuable to their future relationships, dating experiences, and overall well-being. Everything from the workshops and the discussions to the role-playing exercises will pave the way for a better and healthier future for everyone, one youth at a time. Good luck on your new adventure with HeaRT!

# Healthy Relationships Toolkit

## Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

### References

- Arriaga, X. B., & Foshee, V. A. (2004). Adolescent dating violence: Do adolescents follow in their friends', or their parents', footsteps? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 19(2), 162-184.
- Banyard, V. L., & Cross, C. (2008). Consequences of teen dating violence: Understanding intervening variables in ecological context. *Violence Against Women*, 14(9), 998-1013.
- Barber, B.L., & Eccles, J.S. (2003). The joy of romance: Healthy adolescent relationships as an educational agenda. In P. Florsheim (Ed.), *Adolescent romantic relations and sexual behavior* (pp. 335- 370). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Berndt, T. J. (1982). The features and effects of friendship in early adolescence. *Child Development*, 53, 1447-1460.
- Breiding, M. J. (2014). Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization—National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011.
- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 98-124.
- Child Trends Databank. (2015). Dating. Available at: <https://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=dating>
- Clayton HB, Kilmer G, DeGue S, et al. Dating Violence, Sexual Violence, and Bullying Victimization Among High School Students—Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2021. *MMWR Suppl* 2023;72(Suppl-1):66–74. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su7201a8>.
- Cohen, J., Onunaku, N., Clothier, S., & Poppe, J. (2005). *Helping Young Children Succeed: Strategies to promote early childhood social and emotional development*. Washington, DC: National Conference of State Legislatures.
- Connolly, J., Craig, W., Goldberg, A., & Pepler, D. (1999). Conceptions of cross-sex friendships and romantic relationships in early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28(4), 481-494.
- Exner-Cortens D, Eckenrode J, Rothman E. (2013) Longitudinal associations between teen dating violence victimization and adverse health outcomes. *Pediatrics*, 71, 71-78.
- Foshee, V.A., McNaughton-Reyes, H.L., Gottfredson, N.C., Chang, L.Y., Ennett, S.T. (2013). A longitudinal examination of psychological, behavioral, academic, and relationship consequences of dating abuse victimization among a primarily rural sample of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53, 723-729.
- Furman, W. (2002). The emerging field of adolescent romantic relationships. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 11(5), 177-180.
- Furman, W., & Collins, W.A. (2009). Adolescent romantic relationships and experiences. *Handbook of peer interactions, relationships, and groups*, 341-360.
- Giordano, P. C. (2003). Relationships in adolescence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29(1), 257-281.
- Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C., & Bumbarger, B. (2001). The prevention of mental disorders in school-aged children: Current state of the field. *Prevention & Treatment*, 4(1), 1-62.
- Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Surveillance Summaries (Washington, D.C.: 2002), 63(8), 1–18.
- Kann, L., McManus, T., Harris, W., Shanklin, S., Flint, K., Queen, B., Ethier, K.A. (2018). Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2017. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 67(8), 1-114.
- Liz Claiborne, Inc. (2005). Omnibuzz topline findings – teen relationship abuse research, teenage research unlimited. Retrieved from <http://loveisnotabuse.com/web/quest>
- Olsen, E.M., Vivolo-Kantor, V., Kann, L. (2017). Physical and sexual teen dating violence victimization and sexual identity among U.S. high school students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, available online from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517708757>
- Roberts, T.A., Klein, J.D., Fisher, S. (2003). Longitudinal effect of intimate partner abuse on high-risk behavior among adolescents. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 157, 875-881.
- Rubin, K. H., Bukowski, W. M., & Bowker, J. C. (2015). Children in peer groups. *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science*.
- Smith, P.H., White, J.W., Holland, L.J. (2003). A longitudinal perspective on dating violence among adolescent and college-age women. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(7), 1104–1109.
- Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., Siebenbruner, J., & Collins, W. A. (2001). Diverse aspects of dating: Associations with psychosocial functioning from early to middle adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 24(3), 313-336.