

Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault

A Lesson Plan from *Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

Students will be able to:

PS.8.CC.1 – Describe situations and behaviors that constitute bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, incest, rape and dating violence.

PS.8.CC.2 – Discuss the impacts of bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, incest, rape and dating violence and why they are wrong.

PS.8.AI.1 – Identify sources of support such as parents or other trusted adults that they can go to if they are or someone they know is being bullied, harassed, abused or assaulted.

SH.8.INF.1 – Analyze the impact of alcohol and other drugs on safer sexual decision-making and sexual behaviors.

TARGET GRADE:

Middle School – Lesson 9

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Projector and screen
- Computer with Internet access and audio equipment
- White board and markers
- Butcher paper and masking tape (if pre-writing the chart as described on page 4)
- **Homework:** “*Taking Action: Making Sexual Abuse and Assault STOP*” (one per student)

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Access the following videos and have them queued and ready to show to students:
 - “*RAPE: Get the Facts*” (rape and sexual assault):
www.hrmvideo.com/catalog/rape-get-the-facts
 - “*The Signs*” (relationship abuse):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=He1pu4VwKdM&t=8s
- Inform the school counselor that you will be addressing this topic in class and invite them to sit in in case a student discloses any current or past abuse or is triggered by what is discussed. If the counselor is not available, you may wish to follow up with them after the class as needed to let them know whether you observed anything in any of the students that would make you feel concerned and merit follow-up.
- If a student appears to be particularly distressed during the lesson, please send that student to see the school counselor immediately.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Name at least two different types of sexual assault. [Knowledge]
2. List at least one example of each of the following: mutual consent, unfair manipulation, threats and aggression. [Knowledge]
3. Describe at least two possible impacts of a sexual assault or abusive relationship on the person who was assaulted. [Knowledge]
4. Demonstrate an understanding of how to report a sexual assault or abusive relationship. [Knowledge, Skill]
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the warning signs of sexual harassment and sex trafficking. [Knowledge]

Note to the Teacher: *It is a good idea to let students know during the previous class that you will be addressing this topic the next time you meet with them. This gives those who may be survivors of abuse or trauma, who may wish to miss this class session, the opportunity to avoid being triggered and re-traumatized. The student will need to provide a written and sign note by a parent/guardian to excuse from this lesson.*

Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault

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A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar—using the pronoun “they” instead of “her” or “him,” using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to “someone with a vulva” vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom and should make adjustments accordingly.

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Explain to the students that you are going to be talking about particularly intense topics today—sexual abuse, assault, harassment, and trafficking. Refer to your classroom's Group Agreements or Ground Rules. Ask students to be particularly sensitive and respectful during this class session. (2 minutes)

STEP 2: Say, **“Talking about sexual abuse, assault, harassment, and trafficking can sometimes be clear and straightforward. For example, you may know already that rape and sexual assault are when someone is forced to do something sexual they don't want to do. Let's take a quick look at some basic information about sexual assault.”**

Play the video clip, *“RAPE: Get the Facts”* (www.hrmvideo.com/catalog/rape-get-the-facts). Stop the video at 2:00 after McPherson says, “It's a men's issue.”

Ask the students, **“What facts stood out to you about this clip?”** Probe for the following:

- That sexual abuse and assault happens so often in the US
- That it happens so often to people when they're really young
- That most people know the person who assaulted them
- That it happens to boys and men, too
- That it happens to people of all races and ethnicities and other backgrounds

Ask, **“What do you think one of the women interviewed meant when she said, ‘rape is about power and control, it's not about sex?’”** As you ask this, be writing the phrase, “rape is about power and control, it's not about sex” on the white board.

Probe for:

- People who rape aren't concerned about what the other person wants—it's all about “conquering” the other person and getting them to do what they want them to do.
- Even though the overpowering is done through a sexual behavior, the overpowering of the other person is the turn-on, it's not the sex act. People of all ages, body types, and appearances are raped or sexually assaulted. It's not about physical attractiveness, it's about someone deciding that another person is vulnerable in some way and taking complete control away from that person.

Say, **“The social worker talking about boys and men who are sexually assaulted said, ‘For a boy or man to report a sexual assault really takes a lot.’ Why do you think it may feel more difficult for boys and men to report sexual assault?”** Probe for:

Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault

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Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

- Because if a heterosexual guy is assaulted by another guy, he may be worried that other people will think he is or “will become” gay because of what happened. [Be sure to tell them this is not the case.]
- If the guy who was assaulted actually is gay, he may feel that it is unsafe to report it to someone else because he might be worried they’ll discriminate against him, further victimize him, or simply not care.
- If the rapist is female, he may feel like no one will believe him or won’t understand why he could not overpower her or otherwise get away.

Say, “**Don McPherson, the last person who spoke in the clip, talked about how people often think of rape and sexual assault as women’s issues, since the majority of people who report being assaulted are women. What do you think he meant when he said that rape is a men’s issue?**” Probe for:

- Even though anyone of any gender can assault a person of any gender, the vast majority of rapes and sexual assaults in the world are committed by men. So in addition to helping people who are survivors of rape and sexual assault, we need to focus on trying to keep boys and men from ever believing they have a right to force someone else to do something sexual. (15 minutes)

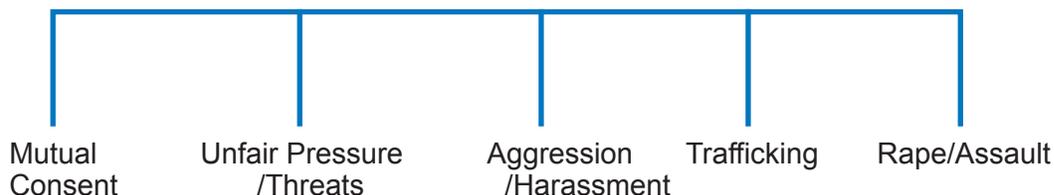
STEP 3: Say, “**I mentioned before that when someone forces someone to do something they don’t want to do, it’s pretty clear cut that it’s sexual assault. But what happens when it’s unclear? What about when someone tells you sexual jokes over and over even after you tell that person to stop? What if someone teases someone else for being “gay”? When anyone is on the receiving end of something sexual like this—such as sexual notes, jokes, innuendos, texts, comments, or gestures—or if any of these are about someone’s sexual orientation, than these are incidences of Sexual Harassment and are illegal in California public schools.**”

Explain the upcoming activity to the students by telling them, “**We’re going to do an activity now where we look at what’s okay and not okay when it comes to sexual touch and behaviors. How we can be clear about what we want to do and don’t want to do? And how we can be sure to recognize whether the other person is really giving their consent—meaning, actively saying “YES”—and that you are sure they want to be kissed, or touched by you, or talked to in that manner.**” (3 minutes)

STEP 4: Either have the following written on the white board with the video screen covering it or have it pre-written on butcher paper and post it on the board at this point:

Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault

*A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect,
Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*



Say, “I’m going to start at the far right, because as I said, rape and sexual assault are the most easily recognizable examples of sexual touch that are never okay and are illegal.”

Rape/Sexual Assault – When someone forces another person to perform a sex act, such as vaginal, oral, or anal sex. This includes when someone uses an object to penetrate another person, even a finger. Rape and sexual assault can be perpetrated by a stranger, but most often is committed by someone the victim already knows. Even if people are already in a romantic relationship and one person tells the other person to STOP or does not actively say YES to a sex act, if one partner still forces the other partner to have sex, then this is still considered rape or sexual assault.

Trafficking – Sex trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. This crime occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in sex acts against his/her will in exchange for money or other goods. The obvious form of sex trafficking is when someone is forced to be a “sex slave” and is sold repeatedly for sex, often several times a day. Not so obvious is when the person who trafficks is the victim’s friend or more often a boyfriend, and the victim has sex with other people to please their partner, because they are in fear of being injured by their partner, or is seeking a lifestyle that the partner promises them. In any form that it takes, sex trafficking—someone forcing someone else to have sex with others—is a crime and is illegal.

Aggression/Harassment – Some examples are when walks by someone and pinches them or touches a sexual body part, where the act is over before the person could have even given their consent. This is a type of assault, even if it may have been intended as a joke or as teasing. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature such as sexual notes, texts, or unwanted texts. If the recipient tells someone to stop this type of harassment even once, and it continues, then it is defined as sexual harassment. Both sexual aggression (if it is physical) and sexual harassment are illegal.

Threats – Refers to when someone tells the other person that if they don’t do something sexual with them, there will be consequences. For example:

- ‘If you don’t have sex with me, I’ll go out and find someone who will.’
- ‘If you don’t have sex with me, I’ll just tell people you did anyway.’
- ‘If you don’t do this, I’ll forward those sexy pictures you texted me to everyone you know.’”

Unfair Pressure – When someone uses what they know is important to the other person to get that person to do what they want. It’s not restricted to sexual things, but we’re going to keep focused on that. For example:

- When someone says, ‘I love you’ to someone even if they don’t love them because they think saying that will get that person to do something sexual with them.

Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault

A Lesson Plan from *Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

- When someone keeps pressuring the other person because they think that person will eventually give in just to make the pressure stop.

Mutual Consent – This is essential in any relationship. It's when both people actively say what they want, and both people agree to any behavior that they are going to do together. When we are talking about doing something sexual in nature, partners need to ask each other if they want to do it. Do they both want the same thing? Never assume that just because someone doesn't verbally say "no" it means that they are ok with it, always ask and wait to hear an empathic "YES." If someone can tell that their partner doesn't feel right about doing something, they need to back off and consider something else. Likewise, if someone doesn't feel right about doing something, they need to speak up and say it.

Say, **"That was a lot to go through! What's your reaction to seeing and hearing all of this? Do you have any questions?"** (15 minutes)

STEP 5: After answering any questions or facilitating comments from the class, say, **"Remember the part in the last video when it said that in most cases sexual assaults are committed by someone who knows the person they assault? This can, unfortunately, also be a family member. When it's committed by a family member it's called 'incest.' And sometimes, it can be a partner, girlfriend, boyfriend, or spouse who is abusive, whether physically or not. For the next part of class, we're going to take a look at some of the abuse that can happen in those types of relationships."**

Show the video clip, *"The Signs"* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=He1pu4VwKdM&t=8s>).

Process by asking the following questions:

- **"How do you think Amanda is feeling when Nick first asked her out?"**
- **"What was the first sign that there was something off about the relationship?"**
- **"How did Nick respond after their first argument? Do you think this was a healthy way to respond or not?"**
- **"Where would you put the different interactions between them on the chart?"**
[Write these up on the chart on the white board or butcher paper.]
- **"When the relationship started moving from Mutual Consent to the right of the chart, what impact(s) did it have on Amanda? What about on her best friend, Ashley?"** (12 minutes)

STEP 6: Say, **"We often hear the term 'dating or domestic violence,' when abusive relationships may not be physically abusive at all. The point here—and the theme that runs throughout these videos and all the information we have been discussing during this class—is 'power and control.' And while you may hear 'power and control' and think that's something you'd want, it's not something that should be a part of a healthy relationship. So even if you're the one doing the manipulating and controlling, your relationship isn't healthy. And keep in mind, some of the behaviors we've been talking about are also illegal.**

Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Someone who is being abused or assaulted needs to speak up—tell a trusted adult at home or at school—if they can so that others can help make the abuse stop and so that it won't happen to someone else.

Say, **"The first step in making it stop is to know how. So the homework for this class will be to visit some websites and answer some questions."** As you distribute the homework assignments, say, **"This is a very intense topic we've discussed. The school counselor knows we were going to talk about this today. If you have more questions and you want to talk about this more, you can speak with the school counselor—and of course, you can always come to me to talk."** (3 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

This lesson is very affective and discussion-based; as such, the teacher will need to assess understanding of the material during the discussions as part of student participation. It is also important to keep in mind that if students have had any personal experience with sexual abuse or assault, they may participate less, which does not necessarily mean they are not understanding the material. The homework assignment will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of some of the class content while also achieving Learning Objective 5.

HOMework:

Students will be given the *"Taking Action: Make Sexual Abuse and Assault STOP"* homework sheet listing several age-appropriate websites that list facts and information about sexual abuse, assault, trafficking, and harassment and how to report these incidents. Students are asked to visit at least one site and respond to several questions about it.

Note to the Teacher: *Be sure to return these homework sheets to the students after you've reviewed them so that they can keep the website information.*

Note: Consent chart adapted from an activity in the curriculum "Sexual Violence in Teenage Lives: A Prevention Curriculum."

**Taking Action: Make Sexual Abuse and Assault STOP
Homework (Lesson 8-8)**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please choose one of the following websites and respond to the questions listed below about that site:

- Break the Cycle: www.breakthecycle.org
- Love is Respect: www.loveisrespect.org
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): www.rainn.org

Which site did you visit? _____

1. Name two facts about sexual abuse or assault from the site that you visited that you didn't know already:

a. _____

b. _____

2. What is this site's phone hotline or text line for talking with someone about a sexual abuse or assault incident?

3. If you knew someone who had been sexually abused or assaulted, would you refer them to this site? Why or why not?

Investigate Sex Trafficking: Visit the website "*Be the Jam – Stop Human Trafficking*" www.bethejam.org/tactics. What are three (3) tactics that traffickers often use to lure their victims into having sex with other people in exchange for money or other goods?

Investigate Sexual Harassment: Visit the RAINN website on "*Sexual Harassment*" www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-harassment. What are three (3) things you learned about sexual harassment after reading this page?

What are two (2) things you can do if you think that you or someone you know is a victim of sex trafficking or sexual harassment?
