

Welcome! This newsletter is for families and is offered to you by The Fourth R program. The Fourth R is a healthy relationship curriculum that your teen receives at school. The goal of the newsletters is to provide practical and usable information, resources, and strategies related to health education that aligns with what your teen is currently learning in class.



The Fourth R Program – Healthy Relationships, Safe Choices, Connected Youth

The Fourth R promotes healthy relationship skills and reduces risk behaviours

Your teen's health class consists of four units of study. This newsletter is related to the first unit of study: **Personal Safety and Injury Prevention.**

What is your teen learning in health class?

- How to recognize stressors
- The benefits and risks of technology and strategies for safety
- Understanding emotional wellbeing and support for self and others
- How to seek help and support
- Understanding and managing conflict
- Unhealthy relationships and understanding consent
- How to end a friendship/relationship



Parent Involvement Matters

Adolescence can be a stressful time. Stressors can come from different sources such as friends, family, technology, and school. Since every stage of life includes stressors, your teen is learning about ways to manage their stress, what coping strategies work for them, and where to go for help when they need it. As an adult you may currently be experiencing a stressor or may face one in the future. Use these times to model for your teen healthy ways to cope with the stress. Some positive things you can do to help yourself when stressed include eating healthy, physical activity, getting enough sleep, and talking to someone. Reinforce these strategies when you notice your teen may be experiencing some stress. And don't forget, sometimes just spending time with one another can be a very helpful coping strategy.

Relationships are very important to your teen right now. Unfortunately, there may be times when conflict arises in these relationships. Your teen is learning about different ways to handle conflict, reduce feelings of anger, and the different styles of communicating in these and other interactions (i.e., assertive, passive, and aggressive). Try and talk with your teen about the relationships in their lives and remind them that they can come to you if they experience any conflict or trouble in their relationships. Discuss with your teen some strategies they can use to de-escalate conflict situations.

To Do:

Parent To-Do: Ask your teen what is important to them in a good friend? You can start off the conversation by providing an example of what is important to you in your friendships (*"To me, a good friend is someone..."*).

How does your teen differ from you when you were their age?

Today's youth live and learn online. Youth spend a lot of time communicating online, hanging out online, learning from their peers through social media and media in general. In fact, they are "always-on" which means between uploading, tweeting, posting, texting, snap chatting, skyping, vining, and scrolling up and down news feeds, they are rarely disconnected. Despite this around the clock connection, youth can feel disconnected and lonely. Encourage and support offline relationships and activities.



How to keep your teen safe and respectful online?

The digital and interconnected world has endless positive possibilities. But there are also risks associated with its use. With the increase use in technology, we also see the occurrence of cyberbullying, meeting people online, and sexting. Blocking or forbidding the use of the Internet will not be effective to eliminate these risks. Rather, it is important as a parent to help your teen develop skills to navigate the online world safely and think critically about the things they see online.

Here are some safe social networking practices you and your teen should discuss and do together.

- **Online friends should be offline friends.** Monitor your teen's friend's profiles, and talk to them about names of people you do not know or recognize. Talk to them about the hazards associated with getting together with someone they "met" online.
- **Share with care.** Your teen might not think there is anything wrong with having their phone number, email, home address, or any other personal information online so discuss with them the reasons why personal information should stay personal.
- **Behave respectfully online just as you would in real life.** Young people need to remember that everyone has access to the Internet and nothing is ever truly deleted. Remind your teen that they should treat others online as they would want to be treated, to respect other people's opinion, and that their digital behaviours are just as important as their real life behaviours.



Unhealthy Relationships

Some teens may think that some behaviours, like name calling and teasing, are a normal part of a relationship. Although these behaviours may not always start out as abusive, they may develop into abusive behaviours and other serious forms of violence. Unhealthy relationships can be in friendships and/or in intimate partner relationships.

What can your family do to help with unhealthy relationships?

- ✓ **Keep communication lines open.** Talk to your teen about the relationships in their life and discuss aspects of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Ask questions but never force your teen to talk if they don't want to.
- ✓ **Don't force them.** Refrain from forbidding your teen from seeing someone you believe to be unhealthy. Trying to force your teen out of a relationship they aren't ready to end may be ineffective and may also damage the lines of communication.
- ✓ **Build your relationship.** Rather than focusing on breaking up your teen's unhealthy relationships, work on building your relationship with your teen. Show your teen that you care for and support them, even if you don't support the unhealthy relationships in their lives.

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