

# Making Sense of Relationships

Lesson 1:  
**Healthy Relationships**

Key stage 3

**NSPCC**

In partnership with

**PSHE**  
Association



# Lesson 1:

## Healthy Relationships

Key stage

3

### Context

As young people start having relationships, it's important that they develop techniques for recognising unwanted behaviours and for keeping themselves safe. That's why there follows a series of six lessons that focus on empowering and supporting young people with those techniques. As the foundation to the series, this first lesson explores healthy relationships and helps young people recognise healthy and unhealthy behaviours.

While PSHE education lessons should be pacy, of course you want to meet the needs of your pupils. Since the activities take one hour to complete, this lesson is planned as a minimum one-hour lesson. But pupils can gain more

from a longer in depth exploration of an activity, so long as you are comfortable leading the discussion and you feel pupils are progressing towards the objectives. If you want to do this, you might want to extend the time to two lessons.

#### Note:

None of the lessons are designed to be taught in isolation. They should always form part of a planned, developmental PSHE education programme. These lessons would fit comfortably within other learning about relationships and sex education or as part of your teaching about online safety.

### Learning objectives

- We are learning about the features of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- We are learning how to negotiate and communicate assertively

### Intended learning outcomes

- ✓ I can describe the features of a healthy relationship and recognise the signs of an unhealthy relationship
- ✓ I can explain when it is appropriate to negotiate in a relationship and when it is necessary to assert my values
- ✓ I can recognise when someone needs help managing unhealthy relationships or risky online behaviours
- ✓ I can describe ways to access support

### Resources required

- Box or envelope for anonymous questions
- Blank paper and pencils for draw and write activity
- Post-it notes or flipchart paper for graffiti wall
- Resource 1: *My values*
- Resource 2: *Riley and Frankie case study*
- [Optional] *Figure outline for Head, Heart, Hands, Mouth, Boot activity*

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## Climate for learning

Before teaching this lesson make sure you have read the accompanying Resource Guidance. It has guidance on establishing ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, communication and handling questions effectively.

## Key words

Healthy, unhealthy, relationship, self-esteem, values, negotiation, loyalty, trust, honesty, respect

## Baseline activity

### Ground rules 5 min

Revisit ground rules and remind pupils of the importance of keeping personal stories private. Draw attention to the anonymous question box and remind them that they can submit questions at any time during or after the lesson.

### Unit baseline assessment activity 10 min

On their own, ask pupils to draw and write what they think a healthy relationship looks like. They should label their image to demonstrate the main characteristics they associate with a healthy relationship. As this is a baseline assessment for the key stage 3 unit of work, it is important to use neutral, non-guiding, inclusive language. For example: "Draw what a healthy relationship looks like" rather than "Draw a romantic relationship between a boy and girl". Avoid giving any further information until the activity has been completed. Pupils should be told that the accuracy of spellings and grammar does not matter and that slang terms may be used if they do not know the correct term.

When this task is completed, collect in their sheets and keep them for the final lesson in this unit (Lesson 6: Consent) when they will be able to add ideas and demonstrate their learning for the unit.

To gauge pupils' understanding, review the content of the draw and write activity during and after the lesson.

### Introduction

Share the learning objectives and outcomes with pupils. Explain that today the class will be thinking about what we mean when we talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships, including how to negotiate and communicate with others effectively.

### Lesson baseline assessment activity 5 min

Present pupils with a graffiti wall (a large piece of flipchart paper attached to the wall or a post-it note for each person) and ask them to write down the most important thing a relationship needs. Remind them at this stage they are thinking about all types of relationships, romantic, family, friendships. Invite pupils to add their ideas to the graffiti wall, either by writing on the flipchart paper or sticking their post-it note. Once pupils have returned to their seats, read over and summarise these ideas.

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## Core activities

### My values 10 min

Ask pupils to reflect on what matters to them in a relationship. Provide them with the statements from *Resource 1: My values* and ask them to place each statement on a continuum from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This exercise is most effective when pupils write on paper as quiet, personal reflection. If they are asked to move around the room, or to do some other visible representation, they might not share their true opinions.

**NB: Teachers should choose from the range of statements those which they think are most appropriate for the age and stage they choose to deliver this lesson within key stage 3.**

Invite pupils who are confident and willing to do so to share their views with the class. If you know the classroom climate is secure you may wish to explore these statements:

- Which of these beliefs is most likely to lead to a healthy relationship?
- Why or how do you know?
- Are there any beliefs that might lead to an unhealthy relationship?
- Why or how do you know?
- How might these beliefs affect how someone behaves in a relationship?

### Features of a relationship 10 min

Ask pupils to look at the six possible features of a relationship below. Working in pairs or small groups, ask pupils to give an example of how each of these features of a relationship might be either healthy or unhealthy in practice.

You may need to model this activity to help pupils recognise that some features of relationships can be both healthy and unhealthy:

*For example: giving gifts can be a really healthy thing to do to show someone you appreciate and care about them, especially if you have put a lot of thought or time into making or finding the gift. However, if gifts are given expecting something in return, or to make the other person in the relationship feel like they owe the gift-giver something, this can be unhealthy and might be interpreted as blackmail.*

1. Spending time together
2. Knowing each other's family and friends
3. Having lots in common
4. Being open and honest
5. Humour
6. Never having an argument

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### **Pupils might suggest the following ideas:**

1. *Spending time together*  
Making time for each other is a good thing – it helps to strengthen relationship bonds. However, spending almost every moment together can be unhealthy because it reduces contact with friendship and family networks. Someone making their partner feel guilty for spending time with others could be controlling the relationship.
2. *Knowing each other's family and friends*  
Connecting the people you care about can deepen and strengthen relationships. But rather than assuming introductions should take place early on, it is important that this is done at a pace both parties agree with. If family or friends find out about a relationship before both parties are ready, there can be a lot of pressure. Or if a breakup occurs in a friendship group then it can be particularly difficult, since managing this requires both parties to be mature and thoughtful.
3. *Having lots in common*  
Common interests can be what initially sparks a connection with someone, and maintains that connection over time. When couples spend quality time together, it helps to strengthen relationship bonds. However, if the couple spend almost every moment together then this can be unhealthy. Healthy couples maintain a balance between time spent together and with others.
4. *Being open and honest*  
Honest communication is healthy. However, being brutally honest is often disrespectful and can damage the receiver's self-esteem. For example: rather than telling someone that you hate their cooking and will never eat anything they make again, it is more loving to offer to cook because you feel you are quite good in the kitchen.
5. *Humour*  
Finding things to laugh at together is healthy – it helps couples to connect. However, humour directed at a partner which goes too far can damage their self-esteem and is disrespectful.
6. *Never having an argument*  
Getting on so well that you rarely argue can be a sign of a good relationship. However, it could also be a sign that one or both parties are not communicating their wants and needs or that they are being dominated by the other person. Good relationships involve negotiation so sometimes it is healthy to disagree. The way this is dealt with shows the health of the relationship and the qualities of the people in it.

### **Head, hearts, hands, mouth, boot      15 min**

As a class, read *Resource 2: Riley and Frankie case study*.

**NB:** This case study has been designed to be intentionally ambiguous, in order to challenge pupils' assumptions and to encourage them to engage with the material at a deeper level. For example: the names of both characters are intended to be gender and ethnically neutral. The case study includes features of both a healthy and unhealthy relationship. It may not be clear to young people on first reading that Riley is beginning to display increasingly controlling behaviour towards Frankie. This needs to be brought out through questioning and class discussion, as well as the message that abuse in relationships, is never acceptable. (whether physical, emotional or controlling behaviour).

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Ask pupils to choose one of the characters in the case study and to reflect on different aspects of their response to the case study. You may choose to provide pupils with a figure outline, asking them to write their answers in the relevant section of the body, or you might choose to lead this activity as a whole class discussion on the board.

Head: What is the character thinking about?

Heart: How does the character feel in this relationship?

Hands: What should the character do next?

Mouth: Who can the character talk to for help and advice? What might they say?

Boot: What does the character need to give the boot? This might be a belief, behaviour or worry that the character will be better off without.

**For pupils who need support:**

Pupils might find it beneficial to read through the case study looking for healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviours (either by highlighting or listing them). They could then focus on completing the Head, Heart and Hands elements of the activity.

**For pupils who need a challenge:**

Ask pupils to imagine they were Riley and Frankie's friends and they had witnessed this argument. What would they say to each of them?

What relationship values is each character holding and how is it affecting their behaviour?

## Assessment for and of learning

**Assessing (demonstrating) progress      5 min**

Ask pupils to return to the graffiti wall from the start of the lesson. Ask each pupil to add one new idea about the most important thing to have a healthy relationship, using a different colour pen or a different colour post-it note.

You should also summarise the key ideas that have arisen from the second attempt at this activity, and compare any similarities or differences in the views of the class.

## Extension activities and home learning

**Extension Activity 1:**

Ask pupils to write a diary entry from the perspective of one of the characters in the case study. This diary entry could either be a month before the argument or a month after the argument.

If writing a month before: What is the relationship like at the moment? How is your character feeling about themselves and their partner? Are there any early warning signs that the argument might happen?

If writing a month afterwards: How was the argument resolved? Are the couple still together and how is your character feeling now? Has anything about the relationship changed? Has the relationship ended, and if so how did this happen?

**Extension Activity 2:**

Ask pupils to design a five-question survey for friends and family about their relationship values. Encourage pupils to be sensitive in their choice of questions and who they ask. The questions should encourage debate about what makes a healthy relationship. Pupils could conduct the survey as part of their home learning with up to ten participants and write a commentary on the results, identifying common themes.

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## Resource 1

### My values

- Everyone has a soulmate and dating is about trying to find “the one”
- Being able to compromise is better than always getting your own way
- It’s too embarrassing to talk about being ready/not ready to have sex with your partner
- A partner’s personality is more important than their looks
- The most important thing in a relationship is to make your partner happy, no matter what
- There is always likely to be one more dominant person in any relationship
- If they really loved me, my partner would know what I wanted without having to be told

## Resource 2

### Riley and Frankie case study

Riley and Frankie started dating six months ago and really enjoy each other’s company. They walk to and from school together, are in most of the same lessons and both go to drama club after school. They have the same taste in music and spend loads of time online sharing videos and photos. Riley is really keen to take the next step in their relationship and wants Frankie to stay overnight, but every time Riley suggests it, Frankie changes the subject and won’t give a definite answer. Riley is getting more and more frustrated about it and has started teasing Frankie about little things, like choice of clothes or silly comments. Frankie isn’t really sure what’s wrong with Riley so is becoming more withdrawn and quiet when they’re together.

On the way home from school yesterday, Frankie wanted to go over to Samira’s instead of coming back to Riley’s. This led to a huge argument in the street and Riley ended up grabbing Frankie’s wrist and saying Frankie shouldn’t go to Samira’s house. Now neither of them are speaking.

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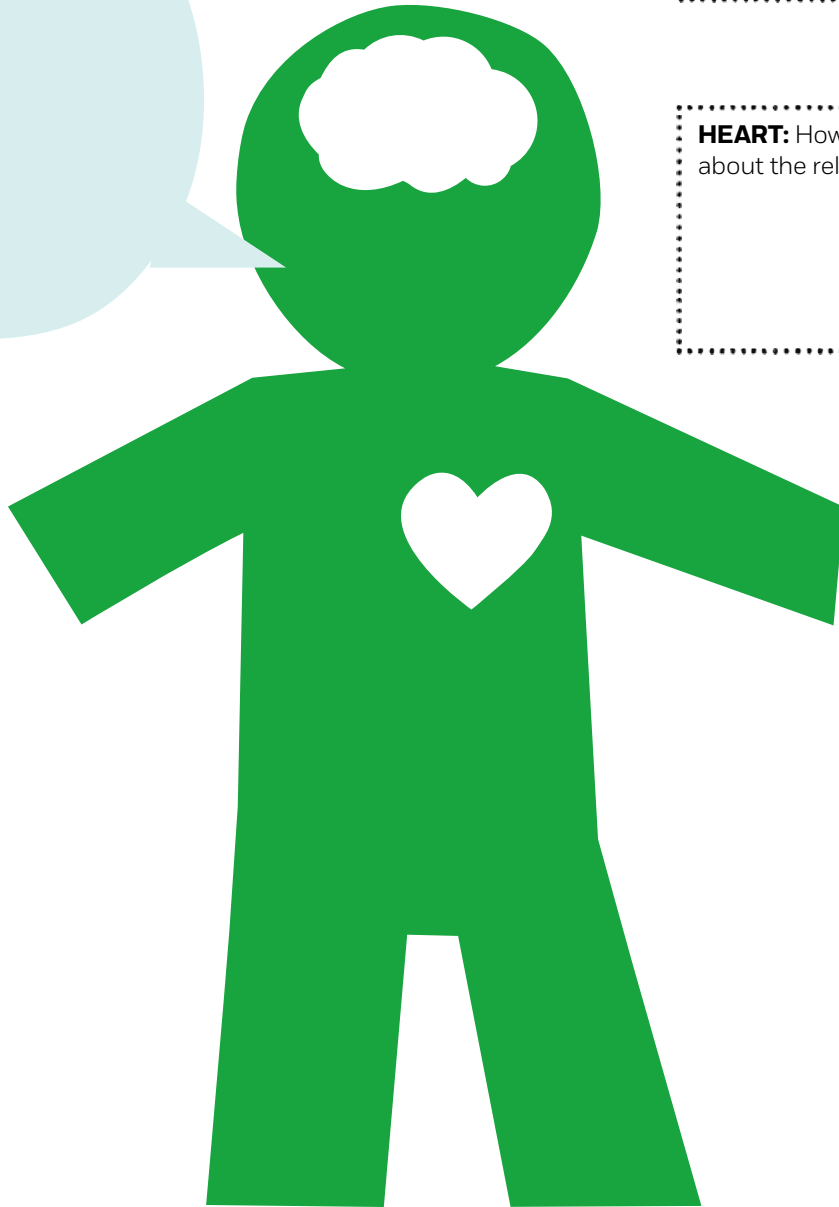
## Resource 3

### Head, Heart, Hands, Mouth, Boot activity

**MOUTH:**  
What might they say?

**HEAD:** What are they  
thinking about?

**HEART:** How are they feeling  
about the relationship?



**HAND:** What should they  
do next?

**BOOT:** What do they need  
to give the boot to?



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Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is a school subject that supports pupils to be healthy, safe and prepared for modern life. The PSHE education curriculum covers a range of pressing issues facing children and young people today, including those relating to relationships, mental and physical health, staying safe and aware online, financial literacy and careers.

The PSHE Association is the national body for PSHE education. A charity and membership organisation, the Association works to improve PSHE education standards by supporting over 20,000 teachers and schools with advice, training and support. Find out more at **[pshe-association.org.uk](https://www.pshe-association.org.uk)**