MODULE:

RELATIONSHIPS ONLINE

DRAFT
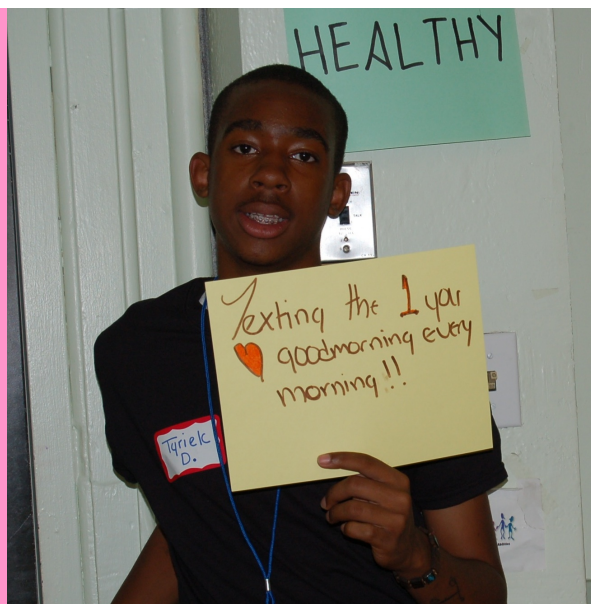
Overview:

This module explores the topic of healthy relationships among youth, in relation to technology use, emotional wellbeing, and both online and offline behaviors. This module targets youth who work as peer leaders, trainers, mentors etc. ("youth ambassadors"), and enables them not only to think critically about this topic, but to identify ways of promoting positive bystanding (or, "upstanding") among their peers.

Objectives:

Participants will explore:
What qualities constitute healthy and kind relationships, and how online behaviors play a role in both healthy and unhealthy relationships
How they as peer leaders can address the opportunities/challenges of social media and social networks for relationships in their own peer teaching activities
How they can promote upstanding among their peers

Age/Grade:

Ages 11-18
Grades 6-12

Audience:

No experience necessary.

Duration:

120 minutes

- Relationship Vocabulary Shoutout (10 minutes)
- Gallery Walk (15 minutes)
- Scenario Discussion (25 minutes)
- Spectrum Activity (20 minutes)
- Design Session (40 minutes)
- Reflection (10 minutes)

Materials:

- Flipboard charts (or posters)
- Paper
- Markers
- Handouts
- Laptop/projector
- Art supplies
- Media equipment

Key Words:

Healthy interpersonal relationships
Emotional health
Bystanding
Upstanding

Relationship Vocab Shoutout

(10 minutes)

Goal:
For participants to come up with a working definition of healthy/unhealthy relationships.

Materials:
Flipchart/poster, markers

[*Gather participants into a circle.*]

Say:
Today, I want to talk about the ways in which what we do online has an impact on the health of our relationships. We'll also talk about what you can do to be an "upstander" for others, and recognize when our friends need help with some of their problems in relationships.

Who's heard of the words "bystander" or "upstander"?

[*Listen to 2-3 responses.*]

Like you suggested, a bystander is someone who observes some kind of act take place. For the purpose of today's workshop, we're talking about acts in cases of unhealthy/unkind relationships. An upstander is someone who does something positive in response – maybe by supporting the victim, helping to stop the act, or in many other ways, depending on the situation.

Great. Now let's talk about relationships: first, we should recognize that "relationships" is a pretty broad term. For our purposes, we're going to define "relationship" to mean any connection between peers. For example, youths are connected to their peers as friends, classmates, or as romantic partners. Whenever we talk about healthy relationships, a tough question always comes up: 'What exactly is a healthy relationship?' Everyone has different ideas about this topic, and there are a lot of good answers.

To make sure we're all on the same page, let's think out loud about words that can describe healthy relationships – by which we don't just mean romantic relationships, but friendships too! We know that sometimes things can go wrong in both types of relationships, so let's talk about healthy behaviors in both of them.

Let's play a small game. As we go around in a circle, let's each say one word that describes healthy relationships. I'll start. I think relationships can be _____ (*supportive, caring, kind, etc.*).

[*Write down what participants say.*]

Say:
Great! Thanks for contributing! Let's take a look at these words on the board. Do we agree with them? [*Wait for feedback.*] Do you have anything extra to add? [*Wait for feedback.*] Based on these words, can someone come up with a one-sentence definition of a healthy relationship?

Gallery Walk
(15 minutes)

Goal:
Participants will begin to think about the roles that technology can play in healthy and unhealthy relationships – a line of thought which will be extended throughout the workshop.

Materials:
Flipcharts/posters, sticky notes, pens

[*Divide participants into pairs.*]

Say:
Now that we have a pretty good list of the things we think about when we talk about 'healthy relationships,' it's time to switch our focus a bit and take a look at our own experiences with relationships **on the internet**.

I'm going to give each pair some sticky notes and a pen. On the posters around the room are different questions. When I give you your materials, you can move around to the posters. Write your answers down on the sticky notes and put them on the posters. If you have more than one answer to a question, write down **each** answer on a sticky and put them onto the posters. You'll have **8 minutes**. Have fun!

Possible Questions:
- Who do you interact with through technology?
- What services (like apps on my phone) or websites do you use to interact with people?
- How have the internet and mobile technologies (like cell phones) given you opportunities for creating or maintaining healthy relationships? How can you keep in touch with people, thanks to cellphones and computers?
- What challenges do the Internet and mobile technologies pose in creating/maintaining healthy relationships? Can you think of friendships that had drama because of things that were posted online?

[*Collect posters at the end of the activity and gather the group together again.*]

Say:
- What are common answers to each of these questions? Are there any things which you think are missing? Are there trends which you notice?
- How has technology changed your relationships with your friends? Romantically?
- Has technology made things easier or more difficult? Why?

Scenario Discussion

(25 minutes)

Note:

The video chosen for this section is aimed at middle-schoolers. We chose it as an easy point to get conversation going for for youths of all ages, but any other appropriate video can easily be substituted.

Goal:

To present relation issues that can arise because of technology, and discuss how, as ambassadors and upstanders, participants can deal with those issues when they happen to their peers.

Materials:

YouTube link for That's Not Cool video: http://youtu.be/iJbYCYAVTjQ

Say:

Now, we're going to watch an animated clip from a website called That's Not Cool. That's Not Cool is a project aimed at getting young people to talk about important online issues. The video we're going to watch is about "over-texting." These videos are generally geared towards younger kids, but that doesn't mean that the issue discussed in this video is not relevant to you. While we watch, let's pay attention to the issues being raised, keeping in mind the various roles in the situation.

[*Watch the video*]

Say:

- What's going on in this video – how does the video describe the problem of over-texting?
- If you were the girl receiving the texts, what would you do? Why?
- If you were one of the friends in the video, would you give the same advice? Why/why not?
- If one of your friends approached you and said that they faced this situation, what advice would you give? Would you take action? What different types of actions could you take?
    - *Follow-up*: Taking these actions to help your friends is also called **upstanding**.
- What can stop someone from standing up for their friend?
- Let's pretend that the girl in the video asks her boyfriend to stop texting her so much. What happens if he starts coming to her house all the time, constantly asking to see her? The problem seems to be getting worse, which can be called **escalation**. What advice would you give to her as the situation gets worse?
    - If the problem does escalate, can you still respond as an upstander in the same way as before? What actions could you take now to be an upstander?
- What does this video tell us about the role of technology in relationships?
    - Is it positive? Negative? How so?

Say:

This video covered only one example of a situation where technology got in the way of a healthy relationship. What are other examples you can think of? What are solutions to these problems?

Spectrum Activity

(20 minutes)

Goal:
To further explore technology's complex role in relationships.

Materials:
Spectrum cards

Say:
We've discussed how technology can complicate our relationships, for better or worse, through the example of texting. Now, let's take a look at many other specific behaviors in healthy and unhealthy relationships and the spectrum of healthy-to-unhealthy they can fall on.

I am going to hand each of you **one** card. On the card is an activity that happens in relationships, like "texting your partner 24/7" or "becoming Facebook official." Once I give you a card, I'd like you to stand up and move to the front of the room. On one side is the **healthiest** relationship behavior, and on the other side is the **unhealthiest** relationship behavior. When you come up, think about how healthy or unhealthy the behavior on the card is, and stand in a line. For example, if I think that "texting your partner 24/7" is less healthy than "writing on your partner's Facebook wall occasionally," then I would stand closer to the unhealthy side. Does anyone have any questions?

Possible Behaviors:

- Texting your partner 24/7
- Sending flirty texts
- Sexting
- Exchanging Facebook passwords
- Becoming Facebook official
- Reading your partner's text messages without their permission
- Spreading gossip about your classmate on Tumblr

- Talking to strangers online
- Posting rude comments on someone's Facebook status
- Texting "good night" or "good morning" (maybe everyday) to someone you care about
- Talking about a romantic break-up publicly on Facebook, Tumblr, etc.
- Tagging your friends in pictures from a party

[*As participants come up and organize themselves, ask them about why they are standing where they are, and encourage students to move around if they feel the need.*]

[*Once participants have arranged themselves into a spectrum, ask them to place the cards on the wall in the front of the room and take a step back so that they can see the whole spectrum.*]

Say:
- Is there only one correct order for this spectrum? Why/why not? Do you all agree?
- Are all of these behaviors necessarily either healthy or unhealthy? Why/why not?
- If X is an unhealthy behavior, what would you do to resolve it?
- How would you talk to someone if you were not okay with what they were doing?
- Are there any other unhealthy behaviors you can think of?
- Are there any other healthy behaviors you can think of?

Design Session
(40 minutes)

Goal:
For participants to use their creativity to express what they learned from the workshop

Materials:
Art supplies, media equipment, paper/pens, handouts

Say:
We've talked a lot today about technology and relationships. Now that we've got you guys thinking, how can you share with others what you've learned? What kind of activities can you create to encourage your peers to become upstanders if they witness any kind of unhealthy behavior in relationships?

[*Split participants into groups of 3 or 4.*]

Say:
We have two suggestions right now, but if you've got a different idea, go ahead and do it! You have **30 minutes**.
- Plan an event for members of your school or community about the role of technology in relationships. Think about how you can use social media, like Facebook or Twitter, to advertise for the event. This could be a documentary screening/discussion, or a campaign like "Spread the Love Week," or even a presentation! **Design posters for the event, and come up with a list of ways to tell your friends about your event online!**
- Create a story about a relationship (romantic or otherwise) and how social media affected it. You can make a short movie, act out a play, create a Facebook Newsfeed or Twitter conversation...let's be creative!

[*Groups will share out for 10+ minutes. Questions to ask them during the discussion are below.*]

Say:
- What topic are you addressing? What do you want participants to learn from your idea?
- How will this idea benefit your school/community/friends?
- What is the target audience?
- How will you advertise your idea to your target audience?
- How do you think your audience will react?

Closing Reflection
(10 minutes)

Goal:

To review the topics we've covered today, including: what constitutes healthy and unhealthy relationships (thinking broadly in terms of a spectrum); the role of technology in relationships; and what we can do when one of our friends feels uncomfortable with someone's behavior in one of their relationships.

Materials:

None

Say:

We hope that, today, you've all thought about healthy relationships a little deeper, especially in terms of how technology has changed things. We also wanted you to think about ways to encourage your friends to "upstand," or to stand up for themselves and others when they see something they are uncomfortable with.

- What were some of the things you learned today?
- What was your favorite activity today? Why?
- What was your least favorite activity today? Why?
- How can you tae what you learned or worked on today, and apply it to your life?
- How would you describe what you did today to your friends?
- What was something new or surprising about today?
- Are there any other questions?

Thanks for participating today!

[*Closing remarks.*]

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Sending flirty texts

Exchanging Facebook passwords

Sexting

Becoming Facebook official

Tagging your friends
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