

DURATION:

Steps 1-3: 30 minutes

Step 4-6: 50 minutes

MATERIALS:

Board+chalk; four relationship stories (from “Case Studies of Relationships in Trouble”), each written on a separate sheet.

TO PREPARE:

Select from the case studies four relationship situations that are most appropriate for your students. Adapt them as needed and copy each one onto a separate sheet of paper. Find out where a person who wants guidance for a troubled relationship or who is facing a risk of violence in a relationship can seek help. (See the last question under Step 6).

love troubles

OVERVIEW: Students finish stories about relationships that show signs of trouble and reflect on what would make them end a relationship. (Note: Prior to this activity, students should have learned about the right to be free from violence in intimate relationships.)

OBJECTIVES: To enable students to identify strategies for dealing with problems in relationships and for ending relationships; to identify behaviors they would not tolerate in a relationship; to clarify their values about dignity in relationships; to foster collaborative learning and increase comfort with public speaking.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Explain:

- Today we will explore problems in relationships.
- What are some of the troubles people commonly find in their romantic relationships? *[Write responses on the board. Examples could include: family involvement, communication, unequal expectations or commitment, jealousy, and conflicts over money or decisionmaking power.]*

2 Divide the class into four groups. Explain:

- I will give each group the beginning of a story about a relationship. Each group must decide how to complete the story. Decide what this couple should do in light of what would be possible.
- Prepare to act out your ending in a skit less than five minutes long. As you are working, imagine and act out the couple’s conversation.

- Two people in each group should take the roles of the two partners, and the other students should give input or can take on other roles, for example, of family members.

3 Give each group a relationship situation and time to prepare.

4 Ask one group to act out its story. Take a few minutes for students to discuss:

- What problems or conflict does this couple have?
- How did they deal with their problems?
- What do you think about how the group resolved the situation? How realistic was this outcome?
- Does anyone have another option to suggest?

- 5 Proceed with the other skits in the same way. Allow about ten minutes per group (skit plus discussion).
- 6 Conclude by facilitating a discussion drawing from the following questions:
 - What are some signs that can warn of trouble in a relationship?
 - What circumstances might keep someone in a relationship that was troubled or violent? (For example, children, economic need, shame about divorce.)
 - Sometimes people end relationships, including marriages. Do people treat divorced men and divorced women in the same way or differently from the way they treat married people? *[If there are differences, ask: Why are they viewed differently? How do you feel about that?]*
 - What circumstances or behavior would cause you to end a relationship?
 - Where can a person who is at risk of violence in a relationship turn for help? Where can a person turn for help to get support and counseling about a troubled relationship?

case studies of relationships in trouble

Adey and **Beto** began their relationship in secondary school and now go to separate universities. They are both home on holidays. Last night they went out with some other friends, and Beto made some comments about Adey that hurt her feelings. When she looked upset, he said he was just kidding. Later, when Adey asked Beto about a woman he kept mentioning, he admitted that he had had sex with her . . .

Cala and **Daoud** have been married for a year. They often have stormy arguments, but they had never come to blows until about a month ago. They had a big fight about Cala's family, and Daoud slapped her a couple of times. The next day he was very apologetic, and brought her a gift, promising it would never happen again. But last night it did. This morning when Cala woke up, her eye was black and swollen shut . . .

Elena and **Fritz** have been dating for several years. They used to have a great time together — they laughed a lot, talked about everything, and had an intense physical relationship. Now it seems that they are too used to each other. They mostly watch TV and hardly talk anymore. Even their sex life has become routine and infrequent. Elena wonders, “What happened to the love I used to feel?”

Grete and **Henri** started going out about a year ago. Grete is 18 and just beginning her university studies, and Henri is 25 and working. Grete is really excited about going to the university and looking forward to making new friends, studying hard, and enjoying life on campus. Henri is feeling that he is ready to settle down and start a family. He thinks he'd like to marry Grete. He mentioned marriage recently and was stunned at Grete's reaction. She looked at him like he was crazy and said, “I am just starting my studies. I want to enjoy life right now and focus on doing well, not get married!”

case studies of relationships in trouble

Ivan and **Josefa** have been partners for more than a year. They both work and like to go out to with their friends. Last night, they went to a club. Josefa talked, laughed, and danced with her girlfriends. Ivan danced with a lot of people and had an interesting conversation with a woman he had just met. He thought he and Josefa had both had a great time, but when they got home, Josefa was angry. She said, “I saw the way you were looking at that woman. Don’t tell me you weren’t interested in her! And the way you were dancing! Trying to attract the attention of everyone in the place!”

Kiki, a university student, works part time, but doesn’t earn much. **Lisa** has a professional job and earns a good salary, so she pays most of their expenses. Kiki and Lisa agreed that when possible Kiki would buy groceries or contribute to the rent, but this rarely happens. When Kiki buys herself clothing, she tends to buy expensive things. This annoys Lisa because she feels such spending is unnecessary. A couple of days ago, Kiki got paid for some work she did over the holidays, and yesterday she went out and spent more than half the money on a computer without discussing it with Lisa. When she came home with it, Lisa became very angry.

Mika and **Nobu** are married and have three children, aged one, three, and six. When Mika’s menstrual period was late, she went to a clinic and learned that she was five weeks pregnant. When she heard the news, Mika felt desperate. She and Nobu barely cope as it is, and money is tight. She was also angry. She suspected that she had become pregnant the night Nobu came home drunk and did not use a condom. She told Nobu that she wanted to have an abortion. Nobu was stunned. He said, “I know it’s hard, but I don’t want you to do that . . .”