



# DEFINING MASCULINITY SERIES

## Healthy Relationships

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**Purpose:** This session will focus on healthy relationships. These discussions are meant to be facilitated with teenage boys and young men, although anyone can use this guide to explore these topics together.

### What you'll need:

Pen and paper  
Laptop/Internet access  
Notecards/Sticky Notes

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# GUIDED DISCUSSION ON HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

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## Check In

Like the last conversation, ease into the conversation with an engaging check-in. Talk about what has made them happy recently, what has been challenging, etc.

## Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships

### Healthy Relationships Activity

Pass out notecards or sticky notes. Ask participants to write one word or phrase per notecard/sticky note that describes a healthy relationship. Place all notes in a pile.

Next, ask participants to write one word or phrase per notecard/sticky note that describes an unhealthy relationship. Place all notes in a separate pile.

### *Questions to consider:*

*What does it look like?*

*How is conflict handled?*

*Is one partner more dominant than the other?*

*How do they handle big decision making?*

Compare the sizes of the two piles. Compare what was easier to think about - healthy or unhealthy.

*Did any personal examples come to mind for you when filling out the cards?*

Ask participants to pick 5 words or phrases from the **healthy pile** that mean the most to them in a relationship. For example, if they choose trust, ask how they would communicate to their friend/partner that they needed more trust within a relationship?

*Questions to consider:*

*Why did you choose these cards?*

*How do you show these in relationships?*

*How do you make sure you are in a relationship that honors these values?*

*How would you communicate your needs to your partner if you were lacking those qualities that mean most to you in a relationship?*

Ask participants to pick 5 words or phrases from the **unhealthy pile** that would be most concerning to them in a relationship. Ask them to consider how they would address these traits within a relationship they are in. Examples of how to respond may include:

*"Respect is important to me in a relationship. When you speak to me that way, I don't feel respected. I need to know that I have your respect."*

*"I feel as if you don't trust me. You continue to call or text me asking where I am or who I'm with and don't believe me when I tell you. I need to have trust within our relationship. Is there a way we can work on this together?"*

# When a Friend is in an Unhealthy Relationship

**Ask participants if they've ever felt like someone they know, maybe a friend, was in an unhealthy relationship.** Ask what warning signs they noticed or what seemed "off".

Emphasize the importance of reaching out for support if you suspect a friend is in an unhealthy relationship. Sometimes, it can be difficult to see these things happening in our own lives, and it takes someone reaching out to validate those unhealthy traits.

Examples of how to support a friend could include:

*"Hey, what's been going on? I've noticed that you've seemed a little off. Is everything okay?"*

*"They seem to be texting you constantly, is everything okay? Let's put our phones away for a bit and just hang out."*

*"Hey, the way they treat you is not okay. Are you okay?"*

Remind participants everyone has a right to a healthy relationship. Healthy relationships involve honesty, trust, respect and open communication between partners and they take effort and compromise from both people.

For more information on healthy masculinity, e-mail us at [prevention@ResilienceMI.org](mailto:prevention@ResilienceMI.org)

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