



2<sup>nd</sup> edition

A Program for Teens Promoting Equality  
and Preventing Violence  
in Teen Dating Relationships

# ACTIVITY GUIDE

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# ViRAJ

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2<sup>nd</sup> Revised Edition

A Program for Teens:  
Promoting Equality and Preventing Violence in Teen Dating Relationships

## **ACTIVITY GUIDE**

written by

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and Félix Joyal Lacerte

Translation by  
Cindy Kelly  
2015

## TRANSLATION FOREWORD

February 20, 2015

We are pleased to share with you the second edition of the ViRAJ Program Activity Guide, with the primary objective of promoting equality and preventing teen dating violence among 14-17-year olds.

This program, which is valued by teens and leads to attitudinal change, will be of interest to anyone seeking a brief program that can be readily integrated into coursework or leisure programming. You will find complementary information at <http://www.viraj.ulaval.ca>. A variety of online tools are also available for you to download at no cost.

ViRAJ's main pedagogical approach includes the use of forum theatre (role playing) and discussion, in addition to visualization exercises and a group game based on a rumour. In particular, the program addresses psychological and sexual violence within dating relationships. This program is compatible with personal development and social education courses in secondary schools. The new edition was subjected to a formative evaluation by 1,000 students as well as an impact evaluation by 263 students (15 years of age), with findings that students who took part in the ViRAJ program were more disapproving of violence than those who had not participated in it. In addition, the program appears to be equally effective for young people who have already been victims and aggressors. Information on further evaluations can be found in the following pages.

This interactive program was first developed in French in the province of Quebec in 1994. From 1995 until now, an English-language version named STOP! was made available. In 2009, the French version was revised, followed by the development of a Spanish version, and lastly, by the revised English version. The revised guide was co-developed by experienced facilitators. We have chosen to standardize the name of the program, and thus it is now entitled ViRAJ in all three language versions. As a result of demand expressed by teens and educators, we went on to develop additional activities with the completion of the PASSAJ Program which contains new

material specifically aimed at 16- and 17-year olds. Please refer to the internet site noted above for information regarding the PASSAJ Program.

We wish to warmly thank Dr. Martine Hébert for her support in program dissemination as well as Mrs. Cindy Kelly for her translation., We also wish to acknowledge the support provided by the *Fonds de recherche sur la société et la culture de la province de Québec* (FRQSC) through the ÉVISSA group (No: 124805) and the ongoing support of Université Laval.

We hope that the ViRAJ Activity Guide inspires you to become involved in violence prevention. We welcome your queries and would be pleased to put further resources at your disposal.

Best regards,

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These organizations made possible, among other things, the involvement of three skilled workshop leaders as well as the printing of this guide. Additionally, through the support provided by the ÉVISSA research team (*Équipe Violence Sexuelle et Santé*), of which Francine Lavoie is a member, we were able to hire a research assistant.

The authors also wish to acknowledge the staff and students of the schools who, over the years, have welcomed the *Entraide Jeunesse* teams. Thanks to their encouragement, they supplied the necessary impetus to complete this revision. In particular, we wish to acknowledge the students of three schools within the National Capital Administrative Region. The Secondary IV students of both Roger-Comtois Secondary School and the Collège Jésus-Marie de Sillery, as well as the Secondary III students of St-Charles de Pont-Rouge Secondary School welcomed these new program versions and assisted in their improvement.

Furthermore, considerable recognition is due to the important contributions made by the original co-authors of the 1994 version of ViRAJ, namely Lucie Vézina, Line Robitaille and Annie Gosselin. The dialogues chosen by these authors in the original version continue to form the basis of this program.

We also wish to thank Marie-Ève Daspe for her sustained support, attention to detail and patience throughout the revision of this program. Jacinthe Lemelin, through her research, provided vital information from the Canadian Criminal Code. Finally, we wish to thank Julie Desrosiers in the Faculty of Law at Université Laval.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Francine Lavoie, Ph.D. is a professor in the École de Psychologie, at Université Laval. With a degree in community psychology from the Université du Québec à Montréal, she has continued to pursue research on the subjects of prevention programs and self-help groups. Since 1989, she supervised scholarly research essential to the development of the first ViRAJ Program (1994), and was involved in the program's revision in 2009. She is also the author of PASSAJ, a program which follows the ViRAJ program. She has conducted evaluations of these two programs in addition to carrying out epidemiological studies on violence in dating relationships, on sexualized social activities in young people, and on Inuit family and conjugal violence.

Valérie Hotton-Paquet holds a technical certificate as well as a degree in social work. Since 2001, she has been carrying out her work at the community level, specifically with young people. She has facilitated various prevention workshops within schools, such as the ViRAJ Program through *Entraide Jeunesse Québec*.

Sylvain Laprise holds a degree in psychology, a technical certificate in special education as well as a college certificate in intercultural cooperation. Since 1998, he has been involved as a community worker with teens and young adults in the Quebec City region. He held the position of co-lead for the ViRAJ Program through *Entraide Jeunesse Québec*.

Félix Joyal Lacerte, with a degree in social work, was also involved as a facilitator and youth worker with *Entraide Jeunesse Québec*. He has served on several youth-related advisory committees and commissions. He has also fulfilled the role of consultant for research groups conducting studies on violence in intimate relationships.

## **ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED WITH ViRAJ**

**Entraide Jeunesse Québec** is a community-based organization created by youth to help youth. Since its inception in 1988, it has offered ongoing activities within the National Capital Region. This organization has become an important resource for young people, and for those involved with them, as a result of its ongoing presence in the region over the past several years. Its mission is to offer support and prevention activities to young people aged 12 to 25 years with the purpose of assisting them to develop the personal skills that foster increased autonomy. <http://www.entraidejeunesse.qc.ca>

The **ÉVISSA** (*Équipe Violence sexuelle et santé*) team is made up of a group of researchers from various Quebec universities with a particular interest in the themes of sexual assault and violence in intimate couple relationships within populations of all age groups. This research group is comprised of: Team Lead, Martine Hébert, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM); Mylène Fernet and Sophie Boucher, UQAM; Mireille Cyr, Université de Montréal; Francine Lavoie, Université Laval. The fields of psychology and sexology are areas of influence in the team's research. Within the province of Quebec, this team is at the forefront of research on the subject of violence in teen dating relationships.

**The Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Intimate Relationship Problems and Sexual Abuse (CRIPCAS)** was founded in 2002. It is an interdisciplinary consortium of Quebec researchers, practitioners and community workers, and over one hundred graduate and postdoctoral students. This group, under the direction of Mireille Cyr, engages in research programs that focus on intimate relationship problems, sexual abuse and the interface between these two issues. Francine Lavoie contributes research within the areas of prevention and epidemiology. CRIPCAS can be found at the following web address: <http://www.cripcas.umontreal.ca/>.

**Université Laval and its École de psychologie** have sustained the ViRAJ program over the years by supporting a variety of research topics as well as by hosting the following internet site: <http://www.viraj.ulaval.ca>



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# INTRODUCTION

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About the Program

The Concept of Violence as Defined by the ViRAJ Program

ViRAJ 2009 Program Values

ViRAJ 2009 Program Strengths

Program Content

Conditions for Successful Facilitation

## **ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

Since 1994, the ViRAJ program has helped a large number of schools establish prevention activities aimed at reducing teen violence. Further to teen and teacher feedback and evaluation, as well as new government guidelines on violence, we saw this as an opportune time to update ViRAJ in order to maximize its impact. We have spent a year working on this update. The source for our inspiration has been the vast experience of the Entraide Jeunesse Québec youth facilitators and the knowledge of the original founder of the concept, Francine Lavoie of the École de psychologie, Université Laval. In the past, Entraide Jeunesse Québec actually fulfilled a dual mandate. At the provincial level, it offered training to groups interested in the ViRAJ program; and in the Québec City region, it provided programming to interested schools. Over the years, the Entraide Jeunesse Québec teams have reached over 20,000 students. This experience has been particularly helpful to Entraide Jeunesse Québec in the completion of this update. In the meantime, Francine Lavoie has continued to document the magnitude and causes of violence within adolescent couples, as well as to develop and evaluate a follow up program to ViRAJ, a program named PASSAJ.

During the revision process, we were determined to maintain and moreover to emphasize the much valued interactive nature of the program. As a result, the second session has now reinforced the forum theatre format which, in the 1994 version, was only used in the first session. Two further strategies were introduced in the second session: two visualization exercises and a group game. Additionally, improvements were made to take into account the environment of today's teens, for example cell phone use and other modes of communication. Still considered relevant today, the program's general and specific objectives have remained virtually the same. This document encompasses five sections: an introduction describing the program features, the contents of two mandatory sessions, supplementary activities, a section containing information for facilitators and a bibliography.

The overall objective of the ViRAJ program is to promote equal relationships and to prevent violence in adolescent dating relationships. In particular, it targets youths aged 14 to 16 within school settings. The program delivers a two part message:

- Controlling a partner at the expense of the partner's personal development is incompatible with love.
- Within an equal relationship, both partners have the ability to think and act with the same rights and freedoms.

This program is in step with the perspectives of Jory (2004) on the subject of adult couples, and in particular, Jory's viewpoints on caring and equal relationships. According to Jory, healthy couples' relationships are ones that have a foundation in equality, fairness and caring between the partners. Equality means that partners treat each other with respect and recognize each other's freedom to make choices. Fairness implies that couples share in the daily stressors of their private and public lives, such as work and study, while adapting to each other's limitations. Solicitude or caring means that the partners show empathy for each other's needs, they encourage each other's strengths rather than dwelling on weaknesses, and they develop bonds based on responsibility rather than on egocentrism and exploitation (Jory, 2004; Lavoie, 2005).

The ViRAJ program aims to change teens' attitudes and behaviours within their dating relationships. Through activities that take place within schools or small group settings, ViRAJ raises the awareness of teens with regards to the impacts of violence in their dating relationships and promotes fair and respectful relationships.

### **The Concept of Violence as Defined by the ViRAJ Program**

The topic of violence addressed by the ViRAJ program is limited to violence experienced by young people in teen dating relationships. Even though violence may exist within homosexual relationships, the ViRAJ program focuses on violence experienced within heterosexual couples. This choice is the result of the brevity of the program. The examples, however, are not a portrayal of only this type of relationship, and can be applied to all types of couples.

Violence is generally defined as: *all behaviors that impair or negatively affect the development of another person, by compromising his or her physical, psychological or sexual integrity.* Violence is a behaviour that is deemed unacceptable and the aggressor is considered as responsible for his or her own actions. This last statement does not intend to minimize the

suffering that the aggressor may have experienced; however, we view this message of self-responsibility as essential in order to encourage behavioural change.

It is important to emphasize that this program highlights **psychological violence**. Today it remains important to raise teens' awareness that violence is the exertion of control over others which often begins with psychological violence. The ViRAJ program also addresses **sexual violence**, but does not broach the topic of physical violence. Many adolescents automatically limit their definition of violence to physical violence and have difficulty grasping psychological and certain forms of sexual violence. As a consequence, ViRAJ has a responsibility to place the emphasis on psychological and sexual violence.

Insert 1 outlines the definitions of the types of violence that are addressed within ViRAJ 2009.

INSERT 1

## DEFINITIONS OF VIOLENCE TYPES

### Psychological Violence

*Verbal abuse and emotional abuse* have long been used to describe two separate realities. We propose instead the use of the single expression *psychological violence* which includes: the use of threats, denigration, dishonesty and control. These behaviours have the effect of upsetting a partner and compromising the partner's wellbeing. This type of psychological violence may be manifested through the presence or absence of actions, for example, sulking, using the silent treatment (withdrawing) or hurtful words. Verbal abuse, therefore, is included within psychological violence.

There are many forms of psychological violence, for example: indifference; threats to a person or to a third party; humiliation; denigration; the use of insults; pressure; blackmail; accusations; financial exploitation; dishonesty; destruction of property; intimidation; control of the partner's freedom of movement; the use of slander; treating a partner as inferior; limiting a partner's access to personal development opportunities (such as taking courses or volunteering);

yelling at a partner to instill fear; isolating partners from friends and family; as well as other manifestations of excessive jealousy.

Certain life situations can be associated with particular forms of psychological violence. Within the context of immigration, for example, there is the threat of expulsion from the host country; the threat of an arranged marriage when this type of union is unwanted; and preventing someone from learning the language of his or her host country. In the case of persons with handicaps, examples of psychological violence include refusing to provide a sign language interpreter to someone who is deaf or to provide assistance to someone with an infirmity (Lavoie, 2005).

### **Sexual Violence**

A source of inspiration for this document comes from the definition provided by the Government of Quebec in *Orientations gouvernementales en matière d'agression sexuelle* (2001).

“[Translation] Sexual assault is an act that is sexual in nature, with or without physical contact, committed by an individual without the consent of the targeted person or, in some cases, such as those involving children, by emotional manipulation or blackmail. The aim of these acts is to subject a person to the desires of another through an abuse of power, use of force or constraint, or by implicit or explicit threats. Sexual assault infringes on a person’s basic rights, particularly their rights to physical and psychological integrity and to personal security.” (p. 22)

Within our concept of sexual violence, which has a larger meaning than that of sexual assault, we include additional elements, for example, refusing to wear a condom, or forcing a partner to assume sexual positions seen in pornographic films.

Therefore, sexual violence can encompass sexual relations that occur without the consent of the partner, unwanted sexual touching or humiliating sexual activities using force. The aggressor often uses manipulation, constraint or threat of constraint to bring about the submission of the person being abused.

### **Physical Violence**

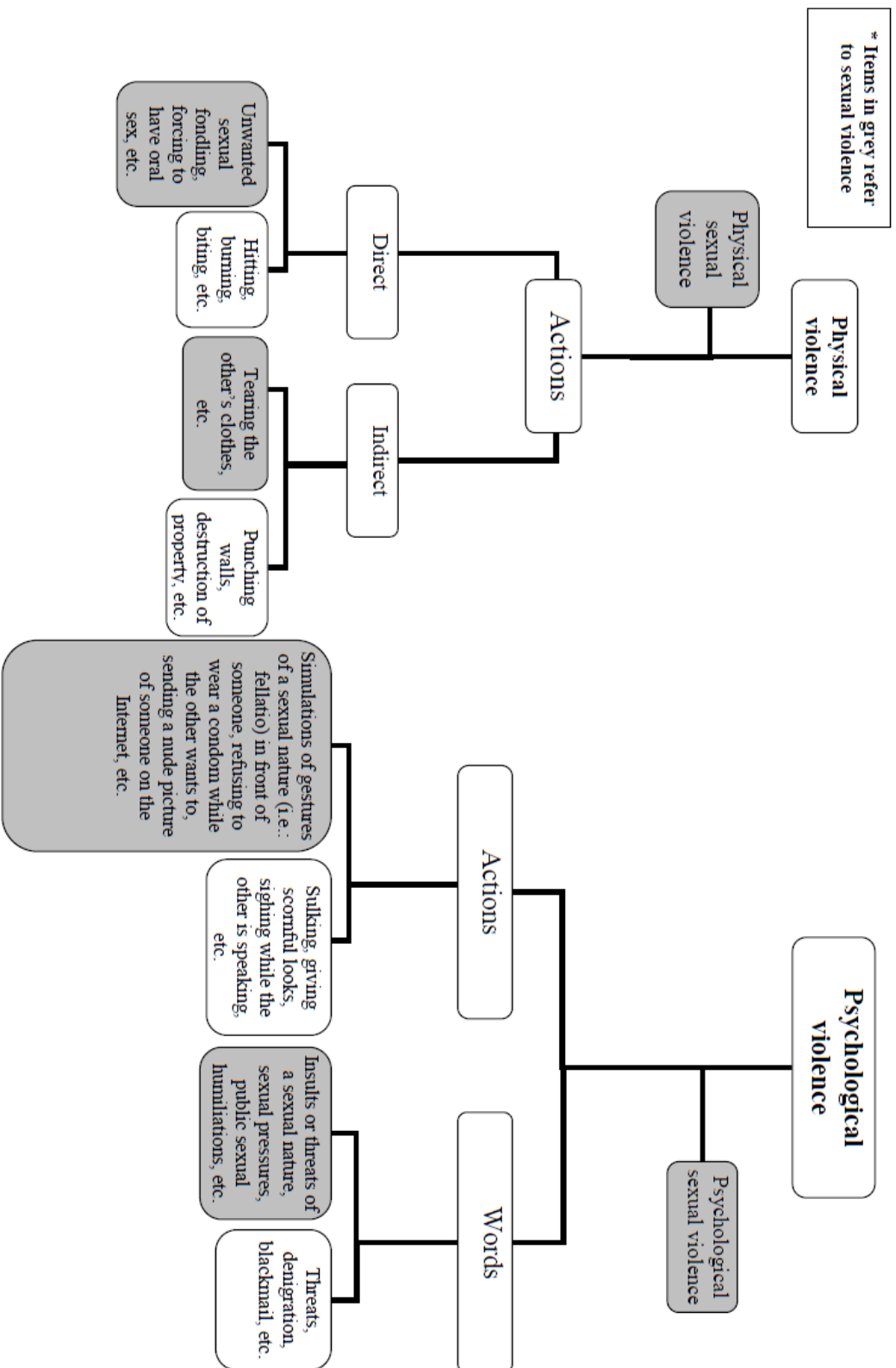
We have used the following definition from an American source:

Physical violence is “the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm. Physical violence includes, but is not limited to: scratching, pushing, (...) grabbing, biting, choking, shaking, (...) hitting, burning, use of a weapon (...), use of restraints or one’s body, size, or strength against another person.” (Saltzman, Fanslow, McMahon, & Shelley, 1999, p. 36)



## Types of violence

Author : Marie-Ève Daspe



## Types of violence

## **ViRAJ 2009 Program Values**

We have revised the program with the following guiding values:

- Denounce violence in all of its forms, since it represents control over another person to the detriment of his or her own personal development.
- Highlight the subtle signs of psychological abuse within couples along with other forms of violence.
- Promote healthy and equal dating and interpersonal relationships.
- Clearly assign responsibility to the aggressor.
- Support adolescent involvement in the search for non-violent solutions.
- Encourage students to express themselves and their opinions while respecting the diversity of experiences and opinions of others.
- Model an equal and respectful collaboration between facilitators of both genders.

## **ViRAJ 2009 Program Strengths**

Outlined below are the principle strengths of the program.

- ViRAJ leads youth to recognize the phenomenon of violence in dating relationships and proposes alternative behaviours.
- The program emphasizes youth interaction and promotes participation.
- The use of theatre forum captures and keeps participants engaged while promoting action. As a result, they play an active role in developing and disseminating the message themselves.
- Very little material is required to facilitate the program and it can be conducted within a classroom or a small group setting.
- The ViRAJ format helps to create an environment that fosters discussion of taboo and more delicate subjects.

- The program does not simply centre on disseminating knowledge but also focuses on generating solutions.
- The program addresses violence exerted by both boys and girls, which helps to undo gender stereotypes without losing sight of the fact that girls experience more physical harm and more dangerous situations than boys.
- The program is based on the actual experiences of adolescents and is representative of their realities.
- The ViRAJ 2009 Program was subjected to a formative evaluation by 1,194 students in 41 classes. Satisfaction and quality of participation are very high, as is the understanding of program content. The 1994 version was the subject of two impact evaluations, which are described in Insert 2.

## INSERT 2

### EVALUATIVE RESEARCH OF ViRAJ 1994

**LAVOIE, F., VÉZINA, L., PICHE, C., & BOIVIN, M. (1995).** Evaluation of a Prevention Program for Violence in Teen Dating Relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 10(4), 517-525.

**Methodology:** Research was carried out to compare two different program formats for the STOP Program. A shorter version of the two workshops was compared to a longer version that included the two main workshops as well as supplementary activities. Five hundred and seventeen students participated in the evaluation; measurements were made to determine the impacts of the program on knowledge and attitudes. Average age of the students was 15 years.

**Results:** The shorter format produced changes in attitudes and knowledge for both boys and girls with regards to violence and abusive control in teen dating relationships. The aim of this research was also to determine the interest in expanding the time frame of the workshops and including a wider variety of activities. Therefore, the positive results favoring the shorter program must be interpreted carefully since the protocol did not allow for optimal presentation of

supplementary activities. As a result, it is possible that supplementary activities delivered more intensively by qualified personnel might significantly enhance the overall experience of students. Nonetheless, it was concluded that the shorter format program comprised of two workshops did in fact lead to significant changes. Therefore, it may be retained as a program offered in schools.

**LAVOIE, F., DUFORT, F., HÉBERT, M. AND VÉZINA, L. (1997).**

Evaluation of a prevention program for violence in teen dating relationships: An evaluation of the STOP Program using a quasi-experimental approach. (Évaluation d'un programme de prévention de la violence lors des fréquentations : une évaluation de VIRAJ selon une approche quasi expérimentale). Final Report submitted to the Conseil québécois de la recherche sociale, 208 pages. ISBN 2-9801676-3-0. Québec: Université Laval. Available from Quebec Directions de santé publique and university libraries. Subsidized by CQRS and FCAR (Quebec).

The initial evaluation showed that teens who participated in the STOP Program showed positive changes in attitudes and knowledge. However, the method used in the evaluation did not allow the authors to attribute the improvements that were measured solely to the program itself. This second evaluation therefore was carried out using a different sample.

Methodology: The primary objective of this evaluative research was to assess the impact of the STOP PROGRAM with the use of questionnaires on 15-year-olds in the short and medium term, i.e., four months post-program and twelve months post-program. This second program evaluation therefore aimed to use a more rigorous evaluation procedure in which there was control for the effects of: how measures were assessed and how questionnaires were administered; as well as participant selection and past history or other events which could explain changes in attitudes and knowledge. The evaluation consisted of a quasi-experimental format using various comparison groups some of whom did not receive the treatment or were not given the pretest questionnaire. In total, 817 Quebec teens participated in this phase of the research.

The second objective was to gather information more directly via personal interviews using a sub-sample of 48 teens, some of whom had past experiences with violence, to determine

concept retention levels six months post-program. At the same time this group also evaluated the impacts of the program.

The third objective was to determine if the program in its original format was suited to teens of varying cultural backgrounds. The level of satisfaction of students in a multiethnic school was sought regarding program format and content using questionnaires and through group discussions. Using the same methods, we also sought to compare the values embedded within the program to the values inherent in the students' own cultural backgrounds. Three classes in a Montreal-area school participated in this assessment with 76 students responding to questionnaires.

**Results:** Research findings showed that the STOP Program in its original format of two workshops was in fact effective in the short and medium term; and revealed that changes were primarily attributable to the program itself and were not attributable to the use of questionnaires or to the influence of external events. The program impact was tested using several groups and no main effect of attrition negatively influenced the validity of the results. The chosen evaluation approach also allowed the researchers to ensure that the experimental groups and the comparison groups were as similar as possible and that the post-program differences between these groups could not be attributed to any prominent pre-program differences amongst the groups.

Furthermore, a study performed at the inception of the program determined that there was good adherence to the format of planned activities; therefore the program evaluation was carried out on the program as it was conceived by the authors. While changes did take place in attitudes and knowledge, in terms of variables such as sense of control, perception of peer pressure or intention to take action, little or no change was apparent. The research revealed no evidence of negative impacts on the group as a whole, either in boys or girls, or in victims or aggressors. In general the opinions of the students were positive regardless of whether the students came from homogeneous francophone backgrounds or from the multiethnic school. This has led us to believe that the program was an enriching experience. In conclusion, the program in its present format was deemed effective. Nonetheless, there may still be room for improvement as it appears that more than just the current short-format version may be required to instill and maintain

violence rejection behaviours in teens. It must also be noted that when topics were not directly addressed in the program, for example, the intention to offer help to victims, no behavioural changes occurred.

## Program Content

This document includes activities that form the basis of the program as well as suggested supplementary activities. The main activities consist of two 75 minute sessions. If it is not possible to allocate 75 minutes to a session, then we suggest combining two class periods, since limiting the session to 60 minutes jeopardizes the achievement of program objectives.

Since it is essential that the promoted messages be repeated in a variety of ways within the school environment to help with attitudinal and behavioural changes, we encourage the schools to fully commit to the two main sessions and to include supplementary activities. The program was intended to include two sessions in order to allow participants the time to reflect. Even though the content is different in each session, they are nonetheless complementary, and therefore cannot not be offered as standalone sessions. Some elements of reflection would be missing should the program be limited to one session. The formative evaluation conducted in 2009 and the program evaluations from 1994 have analyzed the two sessions and we have concluded that the program effectiveness and student satisfaction are predicated on the delivery of both sessions. It is recommended that these sessions be offered in two separate weeks.

The following is a brief description of the two sessions which centre on promoting equality and showing caring attitudes towards one's partner. **Session One** addresses psychological violence. It introduces the idea that violence essentially means that one person exerts control over another while denying that person's needs and points of view. It also suggests that dating partners should accord more respect to each other, along with honoring the partner's needs and personal identity. Four examples of psychological control are provided for discussion. Three of them describe events with negative behaviours while the fourth, on the topic of emotional blackmail, aims to help students understand that positive behaviours, such as offering a gift, can still represent the use of control to satisfy one's own needs. The threat of suicide is also addressed. The scenes are as follows:

- Possessiveness and the Control of Social Relationships
- Control of Physical Appearance
- Jealousy and the Control of Social Relationships
- Control using Emotional Blackmail

**Session Two** addresses psychological and sexual violence, with violence being characterized as the use of control. This session underscores that equality within a couple requires the partners to respect each other's rights and liberty. Furthermore, it highlights that mutual caring is an integral part of a healthy relationship. The session portrays two types of psychological control that build upon those that were presented in the first session. Examination of sexual violence is explored through three scenes. Moreover, the idea of conflict and discussion within a couple is introduced in a subsequent scene (Influence) in order to highlight how this differs from a violent situation. The scenes are as follows:

- Control through Insults
- Influence
- Control through Sexual Pressure
- Control through Sexual Assault
- Control through Alcohol-Influenced Sexual Assault
- Control through Slander

It is extremely important to keep the discussion centered on violence in teen dating relationships. This will help to steer clear of family or conjugal violence which some of the participants may have experienced. The ViRAJ program is a prevention program and should not in any way be construed as therapy. All facilitators who encounter such situations should try to help by referring these students to resource personnel or organizations specializing in this type of intervention.

In each session, the first names of characters do not change. This is meant to make the work of running the session easier. However, this should not lead students to conclude that this range of violence occurs frequently within couples; nor that one should expect to experience such situations before taking action.



## Conditions for Successful Facilitation

The **milieu** plays an important role. Below are some recommendations for schools and groups in other settings to follow:

- Within the school or other location, identify a key person for logistics support and to implement appropriate procedures should a request be made by a participant, or a crisis intervention be required.
- If possible, coordinate with projects already underway in the school or other setting, or link up with future projects.
- Obtain the support of staff and parents.
- Respect the time limits (two 75 minute periods).
- Respect the format (two sessions, two facilitators, interaction with participants, etc.).
- Keep the class groups intact in order to maintain the classroom dynamic and to facilitate sharing and easy communication. In other words, do not combine classes.
- Determine if the presence of the teacher might be advantageous to consolidate learning and assist with discipline.
- The program can be conducted even when the participants in the group are all the same gender.
- If the participants' ages differ from the ages for which this program has been developed, it is important to make adaptations.
- We recommend that the program not be delivered to students under 14 years of age because this program was evaluated when offered to teens who were 14 to 16 years old.

The **facilitators** play a critical role and should possess the following qualities:

- Competence in group facilitation.
- Anti-violence attitudes and behaviours that favour equality in relationships, particularly those between genders.
- Good rapport with teens.
- Knowledge of the topic.
- Respect for the program.

The program should be led by a team of facilitators (preferably a man and a woman). A variety of people can lead the ViRAJ program, such as youth workers, counsellors within the community or the schools, teachers, etc. Anyone who is confident in facilitating groups and who shares the values that are promoted by ViRAJ can deliver the program after some personal preparation. Facilitators will find useful information at [www.viraj.ulaval.ca](http://www.viraj.ulaval.ca). This is a portal which includes:

- Opportunities to share experiences
- A tool box containing the guide and program material
- Posters
- Advice and information
- Research findings

## ACTIVITIES

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Preliminary guidelines for facilitators

SESSION ONE: respect or control.

SESSION TWO: rights and freedom or control.

## **PRELIMINARY GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATORS.**

### **Review Program Expectations at the Start of Each Session.**

“The fictitious situations discussed here today have been developed based on findings from teen interviews and surveys. Even though you may know of other examples of relationships where control is an issue, we would like you to limit discussion to the scenarios presented in the session today. To respect the privacy of others, you will refrain from naming or giving examples in class of people you know.

If you feel the need to talk about a situation that personally affects either you or a friend, we encourage you to contact resource personnel or support services that we will identify later in the session. We will also be available to answer any questions you may have following each session.

Throughout the program, we will emphasize respect for individual differences (e.g. sexual orientation, values and personal experiences), confidentiality and impartiality. You will be asked to be non-judgmental and open to others’ viewpoints. Everyone’s ideas shall be held in mutual respect: it is important not to make fun of or put down anyone else’s opinions. Likewise, it is of equal importance to call into question any inappropriate, racist or sexist comments.”

Lastly, it is recommended that facilitators hand out evaluations. Please see the suggested Evaluation Questionnaire in the *Supplementary Activities* section.

## SESSION 1

## **SESSION ONE**

### **THEME: RESPECT OR CONTROL**

#### **Objectives and Guidelines**

The first session addresses psychological violence by introducing the idea that violence is, in essence, the use of control and a disregard for another's needs and points of view. Session One promotes the idea of greater respect for partners, for their social needs and for each person's individual identity. Four examples of psychological control are presented for discussion. Three of these depict incidents involving negative behaviour. The intent of the fourth example, involving emotional blackmail, is to convey the message that although behaviours such as offering gifts may seem positive, they can still be a form of control intended to satisfy one's own needs. The scenes are as follows:

- Possessiveness and the Control of Social Relationships.
- Control of Physical Appearance.
- Jealousy and the Control of Social Relationships.
- Control using Emotional Blackmail.

#### **Objectives:**

- Foster the understanding that violence involves the use of control.
- Highlight the different types of psychological violence that can exist within dating relationships.
- Create the understanding that responsibility for abuse does not lie with the victim, but rather with the abuser.
- Raise awareness about the importance of social connections outside of the dating relationship.
- Identify and reinforce responses that foster equal and respectful relationships.

- Learn to apply the rights discussed during the session to specific situations where abuse might occur.
- Understand that dating partners have a responsibility to respect each other's rights.

**Core Message**

Controlling a partner at the expense of the partner's personal development is incompatible with love.

**Required Materials:**

- Props to identify gender (washable cap, skirt with velcro closures to fit various sizes, bouquet of flowers or some other small gift)
- Whiteboard
- List of resource personnel within the school and community
- As needed: poster or list of rights as a reminder of the rights being discussed

## SESSION ONE FACILITATION

Begin by presenting the theme, announcing that there will be two sessions and introducing the team of facilitators.

The following questions might provide a good starting point:

- Do you believe that violence in teen couples really exists?
- Do you think that this topic is important enough for us to come and talk about it with you?
- In your opinion, do teens experience the same or less violence than adults?
- Are you aware of different types of violence?

It is precisely because violence can occur within teen dating couples that the ViRAJ program was established, with the particular goals of preventing violence and promoting equal and respectful relationships.

When we talk about “couple relationships”, we include several types of relationships. First, there are couples who are going steady or who see each other regularly; and there are couples who get together for just one night, a date or an encounter. A couple is made up of two people, regardless of gender.

Perhaps you may feel that this subject isn’t relevant to you. However, there is no question that at least once in your lives, all of you will be involved in a couple relationship. Furthermore, it is very possible that a friend experiencing relationship problems might confide in you. So, the subject does in fact concern everyone in one way or another.

Often, we associate violence in couples with slapping or hitting, essentially, physical violence; but before a couple reaches this point, other attitudes and other behaviours have ultimately led up to this physical violence.



In this first session today, we will discuss control. In your opinion, what might that involve? What is control? Can you give examples of what control might look like for an individual or for a couple?

**Possible Participant Responses:**

*Self-control*

- “Control can mean self-control”
- “Limiting our own impulses, desires”

*Influence over others*

- “To be a leader, to want to direct or exercise authority over others, to want to make decisions, influence...”

*Control of others*

- “Always deciding for another person without asking for that person’s opinion”
- “To exploit another person financially”

Self-control, therefore, describes certain qualities and leadership traits. Nonetheless, when the desire for control leads someone to want to make all of the decisions for someone else, to want to possess or dominate that person, or the person resorts to destructive humiliation, this becomes abuse. Violence represents the use of control over others.

Now, let us look at some real life situations.

## **ACTIVITY: FORUM THEATRE**

### **Required Materials:**

- Make sure that you have props such as a miniskirt (adjustable for different sizes) for the female character; a cap for the male character; and, for the fourth scene, a bouquet of flowers or a small gift.

### **Present the Following Guidelines to the Participants:**

- The following activity uses forum theatre, meaning that everyone present can participate.
- It's important to view the forum theatre as a learning opportunity rather than as a theatrical performance.
- The props create caricatures, but their purpose is to help you to assume the role of the characters.
- The facilitation team (preferably a man and a woman) will first act out a scene, while the participants watch without getting involved.
- The scenario presents the story of a dating couple and while participants may believe that the behaviours of one or more of the characters are wrong, they must wait to respond.
- Once the scene is completed, participants will discuss which behaviours they thought were respectful and acceptable as the story evolved, and which behaviours were not. The facilitators will interact with the participants to help fill in any missing elements in the discussion.
- The facilitators will then invite two participants to re-enact the scene and assume the characters' roles using the props, acting and speaking in a way they think is more appropriate.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- We suggest that you use the provided List of Rights to help to define the scope of a partner's freedom. In this particular case, we are not referring to legal rights. The terminology and suggested List of Rights were actually developed by our team. After each scenario, a facilitator will mark the associated right(s) on the board. These can be found in the Discussion sections in the guide. These short phrases are intended to help the participants to recall and use them easily. See Insert 3.
- Following the discussion, print the *right(s)* on the board associated with each situation.
- Remain true to the text and avoid character stereotyping when depicting the controller and the person who is experiencing control. For example, avoid using a meek voice for the victim, and a stern or aggressive voice for the aggressor.
- Despite the fact that the characters' names remain the same throughout the session, this should not lead the participants to conclude that all of these types of control can or should be tolerated before trying to take action; nor should participants assume that all of these types of control occur frequently within one couple relationship.
- Participants asked to re-enact the scene could actually play out a negative scenario which would require the facilitators to intervene. To avoid this, we have provided some guidelines for re-enacting the scene in a positive manner. The guidelines can be found at the end of most of the scenes.
- Note that presented with each scene are scene variations which are designed to help the facilitators and participants to understand the violence types that are involved and to prepare for the discussion; however, these variations will not be role-played during the session.
- We recommend that the gender assigned to each character in a particular scene be respected. However, if the genders are interchanged in some of the scenes, it remains important that

each gender be depicted in both types of roles: the role of experiencing control and that of using control by the end of the session.

### **Note to Facilitators**

The List of Rights from Session Two includes some additional information for review (see Insert 4).

INSERT 3

## **LIST OF RIGHTS**

### **Session One**

#### **Scene 1: Possessiveness and the Control of Social Relationships**

*You have the right to have relationships with others.*

#### **Scene 2: Control of Physical Appearance**

*You have the right to have your choices respected.*

#### **Scene 3: Jealousy and the Control of Social Relationships**

*You have the right to have relationships with others.*

#### **Scene 4: Control using Emotional Blackmail**

*You have the right to demand respect.*

*You have the right to have your partner care about you.*

## SCENE 1

### POSSESSIVENESS AND THE CONTROL OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

*Jenna is babysitting. She calls Max:*

Max: Hello!

Jenna: Hey, Max, Mrs. Clarke just called to say she'll be coming home later than expected. It's too bad because we won't be able to go to the movies!

Max: Well, *I* can still go...

Jenna: Oh no, come babysit with me. Pleeeease... (*sweetly*)

Max: But my friends are planning to go to the movies. I could go with them. I haven't seen them for a while and I really want to see the show.

Jenna: Why don't you give them a call? They'll understand that you're spending time with your girlfriend.

Max: But I'd really rather go to the movie with the guys.

Jenna: (*sigh*) That does it! You want to see a movie with your friends more than you want to spend time with me. Max, who are you really going out with anyway? (*sarcastically*)

Max: Hey, I don't say a word when you go out with *your* friends...

Jenna: Exactly, that's because it doesn't bother you! But it really bothers *me* when you go out with your friends. So you have a choice: it's either me or your friends.

*She hangs up.*

Follow up with the discussion.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Scene 1: Possessiveness and the Control of Social Relationships**

**Objective:** To create awareness of how partners in relationships use possessiveness to exert control

#### **Types of Control:**

- Psychological.
- Isolation of the partner from his or her social network.

**You have the right** to have relationships with others.

#### **Scene Variations:**

- One partner demands that they always sit together at lunch.
- One partner demands that his or her partner ask for permission, meaning the partner has to wait before taking part in activities and making choices, resulting in social isolation.

#### **Key Messages to Convey:**

- It is unacceptable to keep your partner from seeing friends and insisting that they be completely available to you.
- It is unacceptable to put down your partner's friends. You can always express your dislike of spending time with them without resorting to control.

#### **Related Messages:**

- You cannot demand that your partner abandon their circle of friends for you.
- Control of social relationships can be damaging to your partner, preventing them from having a satisfying social life.
- Dating does not mean that your partner has to spend all of their free time in your company, nor that they must be held to account for their time.
- Friend groups can be considered in two very different ways, both of which can be harmful to a couple. The first extreme is demanding that your partner stop seeing their friends; the second is avoiding intimacy with a partner by always being with friends. If a dating partner is concerned that the other person is completely avoiding intimacy in this way, the partner can always express this without resorting to control.

- It is important not to lose your sense of self in a dating relationship.
- It is important to recognize the pleasure that can be had in activities outside of couple relationships.

### **Possible Participant Responses:**

- “Max should dump Jenna and go out with his friends.”
- “Jenna really has a problem with dependence.”
- “Rather than feeling torn between your friends and your girlfriend, you are better to stay home and not go out at all.”
- “If Max is always with his friends, Jenna has the right to demand that he spend the evening with her.”

### **Notes to Facilitators:**

- When teens are dating, they may abandon their social networks which is often harmful. As a result, it is important for dating couples to strike a balance.
- Should the roles of the characters be reversed in the scene, you must formulate your questions accordingly.
- After the discussion, print the *right* on the board that corresponds to the situation.

### **Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of the scene?
- Was control present?
- Who was using control and why?
- Identify the four tactics that Jenna used (assuming that Max wants what she wants; pressuring Max without considering his preferences; imposing an ultimatum to choose between her and Max’s friends; hanging up on him).
- How do you think that Max felt after the conversation?
- How do you think Max will feel if he goes to the movies?

- How do you think Max will feel if he goes to babysit with Jenna?
- Do some people insist that their partner break off friendships without doing the same themselves? (Do as I say, not as I do...)
- Is it right to insist that a girlfriend or boyfriend stop seeing their friends just because you have?
- What might happen in this situation over the long term?
- What does Jenna want? What need does this express?
- What could Jenna do to address her need without resorting to control?
- What do you think of situations where one person always wants to be with their friends, yet avoids being alone with their partner?
- What could happen?
  - If it happens often, Max might get mad and leave Jenna.
  - If it happens often, Max might give in to Jenna and lose his friends.
- How would you turn this scene into a positive one?

### **Two Participants Re-Enact a Positive Scene:**

#### **Ensure the following:**

- Suggest compromises or other ways to resolve the issue.
- Jenna must express her need (for example, she wants to see Max).
- Max should not ask for Jenna's permission.
- Max should not feel bad about going to the movies with his friends.
- There shall be no transfer of control to Max.
- Jenna should not bargain (for example, *It's OK this time, but the next time you're going to babysit with me*).
- Jenna should not repeat any of the four tactics she used to control Max.



## SCENE 2

### CONROL OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

*Jenna is waiting for her boyfriend Max:*

Jenna: What on earth is he doing? He told me that he would be here by nine o'clock. The party has probably already started and I really want him to see my new skirt.

*Max knocks at the door:*

Jenna: Finally! He's here!

*Jenna opens the door: Max looks Jenna up and down skeptically.*

Jenna: Hi, we'd better hurry up 'cause my mother wants me home before midnight. Look at my new skirt. I just love it.

*Max doesn't listen to Jenna and sighs.*

Max: Are you really coming to the party looking like *that*?

Jenna: Yes, why, what's the matter?

Max: *That*...you think that's appropriate?

Jenna: Come *on*! Natalie has a skirt like this and you said that you thought it was nice...

Max: Yeah, but *that's* totally different.

Jenna: What do you mean, it's different?

Max: Well, Natalie isn't my girlfriend.

Jenna: What do you mean?

Max: What I mean is if you don't get changed, I won't be taking you. And hurry up! It's already nine thirty. The party's probably already started.

Follow up with the discussion.

## DISCUSSION

### Scene 2: Control of Physical Appearance.

**Objective:** To depict control of physical appearance.

#### Types of Control:

- Psychological.
- Possessiveness (treating another person as an object).
- Jealousy (a secondary theme), may occur in situations surrounding clothing choices, where one person believes that their partner is wearing clothing that is too revealing. At the root of this is a fear that the partner will attract attention.

**You have the right** to have your choices respected.

#### Scene Variations:

- One person demands that the partner make changes to their physical appearance, for example, make changes to hairstyle, body weight, muscle build, or body and facial hair to comply with their own personal tastes.
- Note: The scene variations may not lend themselves readily to being interpreted as jealousy.

#### Key Message to Convey:

- It is not acceptable to make decisions about someone else's style or appearance, clothing, hair or makeup.

#### Related Messages:

- Denying a person's choice to dress attractively, or in a way that makes the person feel good about him or herself, is a form of possessiveness.
- Controlling someone's physical appearance may stem from a fear of losing an attractive partner. This fear, however, does not justify controlling behaviour. This signifies a lack of confidence.

- It is important to stay true to yourself and to your own choices, for example your style and taste in clothing; and to avoid changing yourself simply to comply with someone else's wishes.
- While you may wish to give your opinion about your partner's appearance, you must remain conscious of the impact this has on him or her. If this type of behaviour becomes persistent or demeaning, it may have a damaging impact on your partner's self-esteem. Examples of this might include constant negative comments about body weight or build.
- Pay attention to the power you have over your girlfriend or boyfriend. There is no denying the importance of a partner's opinion.

### **Possible Participant Responses:**

- Some participants may respond antagonistically, which is counterproductive to the positive resolution of the problem and could lead to hurtful rejoinders such as:
  - "I don't tell *you* what to wear."
  - "If you don't like it, I'll go to the party by myself."
- Others may reluctantly submit to a partner's demands, saying for example:
  - "It's no use fighting over it, I'll just give in quietly."

### **Notes to Facilitators:**

- For girls, control of their partner's appearance often seems linked to concerns that their partner will look silly or badly dressed. For boys, it may be linked to the same concerns, however, they may be even more motivated by the desire to limit their girlfriends' sexy appearance. Others may appreciate their partner's popularity or ability to attract their friends' attention so long as it is done in their presence.
- **Hypersexualization:** Discussions of the scene could lead to the topic of hypersexualization. Some participants will say that societal pressure concerning fashion encourages girls to choose suggestive or sexy clothing. However, both the ViRAJ and PASSAJ programs aim to lead participants to reflect on the use of male power which is sometimes expressed through the control of clothing choices. Accordingly, facilitators are advised to bring the discussion

back to this theme. The topic of hypersexualization might be the subject for a separate activity or session, for example, watching the film *Sexy Inc.*

Some boys may encourage their girlfriends to dress suggestively or to follow fashion trends that are detrimental to a girl's self-image, to how she wishes to portray herself, or to feeling at ease with herself. Some girls, believing that they have found the best way to attract male attention, will adopt the latest fashion and make-up trends. Some boys, dismayed by how a female friend or girlfriend looks when she is transformed by all of this, will think it is acceptable to request her to change, impressing upon her that she should think about the image she is projecting. Other boys will demand that a girl dress more modestly, hide her figure, her arms or wear a veil. In our society, we believe that everyone should be able to make personally informed choices about clothing when faced with religious dictates and all other forms of pressure, such as marketing, pornography and social pressure. Examples of exercising control over the physical appearance of a girlfriend or sister include demanding that she wear a short or long skirt, or even a veil. These are ways of sexualizing the female body, which is then perceived as a male possession. ViRAJ aims to instill carefully considered, responsible freedom of thought in this respect. Modesty, self-respect, stylishness, beauty and attractiveness can all be expressed in many suitable ways, which are ours to identify.

- Some teens may express their wish to keep the peace and avoid conflict within their relationships by going along with their partners' demands.
- Should the roles of the characters be reversed in the scene, you must formulate your questions accordingly.
- After the discussion, print the *right* on the board that corresponds to the situation.

#### **Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of the scene?
- Was control present?

- Who was using control?
- How was control depicted?
- What did Max want to control?
- Why was he trying to control what Jenna wore?
- What feelings were behind Max's behaviour?
- Why did Jenna dress this way?
- How could Jenna respond to Max's behaviour? What could she say to him? (*The right to have your choices respected*)
- Do you think people often try to control their partners' physical appearance?
- Do some girls try to control their boyfriends or girlfriends?
- Is this done in the same way?
- What are the impacts on the person being controlled?
- What might happen if you succeed in controlling a person's physical appearance?
- What might happen if this behaviour is repetitive or sustained over time?
- What is missing in this couple's relationship (communication, trust)?
- Is it acceptable to express an opinion about a boyfriend or girlfriend's recently purchased clothing? In what way should this be done?
- What solutions can you suggest in this situation?
- If Max asks Jenna to change in a respectful way, is this acceptable?

- If Max clearly expresses his discomfort, is this a valid reason for Jenna to change her clothes?
- How would you turn this scene into a positive one?

**Two Participants Re-Enact a Positive Scenario:**

**Ensure the following:**

- Jenna must not change her clothing.
- Max must not exert pressure in any way.
- Jenna must have a freedom of choice.
- Jenna must not ask for permission.
- There must not be a reversal of control.

### SCENE 3

#### JEALOUSY AND THE CONTROL OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

*Max and Jenna are sitting beside each other. Max seems upset and Jenna notices it.*

Jenna: Wasn't it fun yesterday?

Max: Yeah, it was ok (with a sigh).

Jenna: What's the matter? You've been sitting here for the past half hour looking upset!

Max: You were quite the *flirt* at the party yesterday...

Jenna: What do you mean, I was quite the flirt?

Max: You spent the whole evening talking to Jack!

Jenna: I didn't talk to him that much!

Max: You talked to him too much. I was really starting to wonder who it is you're going out with, him or me...

Jenna: Are you crazy?

Max: I'm not crazy. It's obvious that you wouldn't mind if the two of you got together.

Jenna: Max, are you jealous?

Max: If I'm jealous, it's because I love you...

Follow up with the discussion.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Scene 3: Jealousy and the Control of Social Relationships**

**Objective:** To depict jealousy and its effect on restricting a partner's social relationships.

#### **Types of Control:**

- Psychological
- Setting limits on how a partner interacts with others
- Jealous outbursts

**You have the right** to have relationships with others.

#### **Scene Variations:**

- One partner places limits on the other partner's social interactions: For example, one partner restricts the amount of time the other partner spends with others; forbids the other partner's interaction with certain people; demands to spend more time with the partner when in groups; prevents the partner from working; or checks the partner's cell phone and internet messages.

#### **Key Message to Convey:**

- It is unacceptable to decide with whom a partner may speak or spend time.

#### **Related Messages:**

- Social control often occurs under the pretext of jealousy because, for some people, jealousy is proof of love, which is false.
- Social control within couples can be damaging as it prevents partners from experiencing satisfying social interactions outside of the couple relationship.
- Jealousy should be viewed as a red flag. It signals the need for one partner to discuss whether or not there is reason to fear the loss of the other.
- You are not someone's possession, nor is anyone else your possession.
- It is important for both partners in the relationship to have a sense of freedom and for the relationship to be based on mutual respect.



- It is important for partners to be honest with each other.
- If you are concerned that someone covets your partner, then it is with your partner that you must discuss the situation.
- The person who feels jealous should express his or her concern in a respectful way, without accusing the other person.

#### **Avoid this Message:**

- “Jealousy is proof of love”. This is false. Rather, jealousy stems from a lack of self-confidence and trust; and a fear of losing the other person.

#### **Possible Participant Responses:**

- “Love and jealousy go together!” To the participants, jealousy seems right in certain circumstances and unacceptable in others.
- “In my case, it’s not my partner that I don’t trust, it’s *other* people.”
- “I can do what I want.”

#### **Notes to Facilitators:**

- Through participant discussion, it is important to come up with a suitable definition of the concept of freedom within a couple.
- Avoid encouraging the idea of tolerance for infidelity.
- Reframe the discussion if participants remark that Jenna spent a lot of time talking to Jack. This is a false argument.
- The facilitator must be careful when discussing the topic of jealousy. While a person may feel jealous, they do not have to act on it. Moreover, it is not normal to feel this way all of the time. By indicating that jealousy is normal, the facilitator justifies the controlling behaviour that can accompany this feeling. The facilitator should instead emphasize constructive ways to respond when someone experiences jealousy; and highlight the importance of effectively communicating this feeling without trying to limit the partner’s social interactions or control the partner’s behaviours.
- Should the roles of the characters be reversed in the scene, you must formulate your questions accordingly.

- After the discussion, print the *right* on the board that corresponds to the situation.

**Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of the scene?
- Was control present?
- Who was controlling?
- What did Max want to control?
- Why?
- Is jealousy proof of love? Is it flattering?
- What positive behaviours are proof of love?
- What is behind jealousy? (Lack of self-confidence and trust, fear of losing the exclusive love of a partner.)
- If you don't experience jealousy in a relationship does that mean there isn't love?
- What feelings does jealousy produce?
- What can jealousy lead people to do?
- Can excessive jealousy infringe on a partner's rights?
- Can being with a very jealous person change your life? If so, how?
- Are there acceptable or unacceptable levels of jealousy?
- Is it normal to go through a partner's e-mails, text messages or other communications?
- How far can jealousy go?

- When you experience jealousy, what are some possible solutions to dealing with these feelings?
- How would you turn this scene into a positive one?

### **Two Participants Re-Enact a Positive Scenario:**

#### **Ensure the following:**

- Emotions should be expressed using “I” statements, and without accusing the other person.
- Speak calmly.
- Jenna should reassure Max.
- Jenna must not, in effect, be interested in Jack as this will change the basis of the discussion.
- The partners must not restrict each other’s freedom.
- Following a discussion, the couple should not agree to keep an eye on each other’s interactions.
- A reversal of control should not occur.

## SCENE 4

### CONTROL USING EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL

*Jenna is doing her homework. The doorbell rings and she goes to open the door.*

Jenna: (*Hesitantly*) Ah! Max...

Max: I just want to speak to you...

Jenna: I'm really not sure I feel like it. After the way you treated me... I need some time to think.

*Max presents her with flowers or a small gift*

Max: For the girl I love more than anything in the world...

Jenna: (*Embarrassed*) Oh, thanks, I...I... They are beautiful, but uh... You know, yesterday, you really hurt me when you laughed like that at my art project in front of everyone.

Max: It's true that I made a little fun of you, but it wasn't my fault. I'd just found out that I got failing grades in Math and English so I was letting off steam.

Jenna: I was really hurt.

Max: Yes, but don't you see what a tough situation I'm in? Two failing grades. Imagine what my parents will say...Ah, I'm so down about it.

Jenna: (*In a sympathetic tone*) Yeah, poor you...

Max: Jenna, you must see that you can't blame me. Don't leave me, I really need you. You're the only one who understands me...

Follow up with the discussion.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Scene 4: Control Using Emotional Blackmail**

**Objective:** To highlight control through manipulation of feelings.

#### **Types of Control:**

- Eliciting sympathy by manipulating feelings
- Putting someone down (this theme is present in a minor way and is presented more fully in Session Two)
- Trivializing or being indifferent to a partner's feelings

**You have the right** to demand respect.

**You have the right** to have your partner care about you.

#### **Scene Variation:**

- One partner controls the other through guilt/fear of a possible break up.

\*Do not introduce the topic of emotional blackmail using threats.

#### **Messages to Convey:**

- It is unacceptable to play with someone's feelings or emotions for personal gain.
- Aggressive or mean behaviours are not the only methods used to control others. For example, a partner may try to gain a partner's sympathy or offer gifts for personal benefit.
- While it is normal to experience frustration, it is not acceptable to impose these feelings and emotional states onto others.
- Whether others are present or not, making fun of someone represents a form of control.
- Even if a person is experiencing personal issues, this does not justify controlling behaviour. There is no excuse for violence. The person who carries out a violent act remains responsible for their own actions.

#### **Related Message:**

- Trivializing or being indifferent to a victim's feelings is also a form of psychological control.

**Possible Participant Responses:**

- “Jenna is being taken advantage of; she is too submissive.”
- “To me, it seems obvious that Max is being manipulative.”
- “He is trying to buy her with a gift.”

**Notes to Facilitators:**

- The scene can be replayed by reversing the characters’ roles. For example, Jenna might make fun of a song that Max has written, and then offer him a CD of his favorite music instead flowers.
- Should the roles of the characters be reversed in the scene, you must formulate your questions accordingly.
- Take time to discuss the use of mockery as part of psychological violence, however, keep most of the discussion focused on manipulation.
- Following the discussion, print the corresponding *right* on the board.

**Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of the scene?
- Was control present?
- Who was using control?
- How did Max use control? (Avoiding taking responsibility, eliciting sympathy, being indifferent to Jenna’s needs)
- What was Max’s intention in bringing Jenna flowers?
- What do you think of Max using his own personal problems to control Jenna?
- What do you think of how Max begged Jenna not to leave him?

- Did Max go to see Jenna to say he was sorry? (Help the participants to see that, overall, Max was making up excuses for his behaviour.)
- Did Max acknowledge that he was at fault?
- How could Max manage his frustrations instead of turning his anger on Jenna?
- What did you think when Max told Jenna she was portraying the situation as worse than it really was? That she was exaggerating?
- If Max apologizes, but then resumes his behaviour, what do you think will happen?
- How could the rights of caring and respect be expressed within this couple?
- How would you turn this scene into a positive one?

### **Two Participants Re-Enact a Positive Scenario:**

#### **Ensure the following:**

- Max should apologize and admit that he did something wrong.
- Max should pay attention to Jenna's feelings.
- Max should commit to changing his behaviour.
- There should not be a reversal of control, that is, Max should not become the victim while Jenna becomes the controlling person.
- Max should not bring Jenna flowers.

## **SESSION ONE CONCLUSION**

### **Control by Threat of Suicide**

To engage participants on the topic of control by threat of suicide, you can use these two possible approaches:

**Approach A** (use this approach if Scene 4 was presented during the session)

Let's go back over the last scene about control using emotional blackmail. This time, Max could continue the manipulation and go so far as to threaten suicide if Jenna doesn't give in to his blackmail. What should be done in this type of situation?

### **Approach B**

We have presented four types of control: control of social relationships through possessiveness, control of physical appearance, control of social relationships through jealousy and control through emotional blackmail.

- Are there examples of other types of control?
- If the partners break up, could control continue? What type of control might occur in this circumstance?

### **Possible Participant Responses:**

- "The person who was dumped might harass the ex-girlfriend or ex-boyfriend."
- "Suicide threats..."

### **Note to Facilitators**

The question of suicide threats should be handled carefully to avoid contradicting messages endorsed by suicide prevention programs. For this reason, we want to emphasize that suicide threats following breakups, whether used to control a partner or not, must always be taken seriously because heartbreak can be painful and some people go so far as to actually end their lives.

If teens experience this type of situation, they must be encouraged to:



- Believe the person who threatens suicide because it could really happen.
- Break confidentiality.
- Ensure that the person gets help. They must have someone to talk to about it, whether it be a resource person, friend or parent.
- Get help from the appropriate resource, for example, a suicide prevention centre.
- Stay true to the decision to end the relationship, ensure personal safety, and create distance from the situation. It's important to remember that despite everything, when you no longer love someone, you must leave the relationship.
- Do not assume responsibility for another person's life or their emotional state.

### **Control is About Violence, It's Not About Love**

Sometimes it is difficult for the victim who experiences control through psychological violence to see it for what it is. This is also true for the friends of the victim. The scenes of control that have been enacted and discussed during this session are examples of psychological violence. Each scene presented one person who used power over another to control physical appearance, social relationships and/or emotions. This controlling behaviour prevents others from fully developing and experiencing satisfying loving relationships. These varying forms of psychological violence may herald future physical violence, and, so, may represent the potential for an escalation in violence. Control gradually takes root over time, so it is important to intervene early.

To resolve a control problem, the controlling person must acknowledge the need to change. With control issues, responsibility lies first and foremost with the individual, not the couple. At times, the healthiest solution may be to break up and while this may seem difficult, it remains a solution to consider.

What is to be gained by controlling another person? What is to be lost? In the short term, controlling a partner may seem advantageous, however, the person being controlled will come to fear their partner's reactions which often leads to avoiding talking about certain aspects of their life, or even lying to the controlling partner. Communication will become constrained and the quality of a couple's relationship may really suffer.

### **Message Recap**

- Controlling a partner at the expense of the partner's personal development is incompatible with love.
- Control is not acceptable, even if it only happens once.
- Among other things, psychological violence can lead to physical violence and diminished self-esteem. Therefore, this type of violence is not acceptable.
- You may have realized that someone is trying to control you or that you are controlling someone else. This may be the opportunity to change your behaviours to experience more respectful relationships. (Indicate the List of Rights written on the board).
- Don't hesitate to contact the resource persons listed in your school agenda, in your school resource directory or in your local community support services listings should you feel the need to do so.

Announce details of the next session.

## SESSION 2

## **SESSION TWO**

### **THEME: RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OR CONTROL**

#### **Objectives and Guidelines.**

Session Two addresses the topic of psychological and sexual violence. Together, we will examine how violence represents the abusive use of power to control another person. We will look at how equality in dating relationships means that both partners have equal rights and freedom; and how partners in healthy relationships show caring attitudes towards each other. Two further types of psychological control will be depicted, in addition to those shown in Session One. Three scenes allow us to closely examine sexual violence. By contrast, in another scene, we show how couples can engage in discussions and have conflicting opinions, and how this differs from violent situations. The scenes are as follows:

- Control through Insults.
- Influence.
- Control through Sexual Pressure.
- Control through Sexual Assault.
- Control through Alcohol-influenced Sexual Assault.
- Control through Slander.

#### **Objectives:**

- Foster the understanding that sexual violence is another form of control.
- Highlight the different types of psychological violence that can exist within dating relationships.
- Contrast how violence differs from conflict, discussion and difference of opinion.
- Highlight the importance for dating partners to pay attention to each other and to respect each other's freedom and independence within their relationships.
- Create awareness that responsibility for abuse lies with the abuser and must not be attributed to the victim.

- Identify and put into practice responses that foster an equal and respectful relationship.
- Learn to apply the rights discussed during the session to specific situations where violence might occur.
- Understand that dating partners have a responsibility to respect each other's rights.

**Core Message:**

In an equal relationship, both partners have the same rights, and are free to think and to act independently.

**Required Materials:**

- Gender-identifying props such as a miniskirt with velcro closure, adjustable for different sizes; a washable cap.
- Whiteboard.
- List of resource personnel within the school and the community.
- As needed: poster or list of rights to remind participants of the rights being discussed.

## **REVIEW OF SESSION ONE**

Start the session by asking participants to summarize the key elements that were presented in Session One (the use of control over others and how this is unacceptable).

**The core message from Session One:** controlling a partner at the expense of the partner's personal development is incompatible with love.

Now, let's take a look at some additional real life situations.

## **SESSION TWO ACTIVITIES: FORUM THEATRE, VISUALIZATION EXERCISES AND GROUP GAME**

### **Required Materials:**

- Props that identify gender, such as a washable cap for the male character and a skirt that adjusts for various sizes for the female character.

### **Present the Following Guidelines to the Participants:**

- The following activities include the use of forum theatre, visualization exercises and a group game which will be described later.
- It's important to view the forum theatre as a learning opportunity rather than as a theatrical performance.
- The props create caricatures, but their purpose is to help you to assume the role of the characters.
- The facilitation team (preferably a man and a woman) will first act out a scene, while the participants watch without getting involved.
- The scenario presents the story of a dating couple and while participants may believe that the behaviours of one or more of the characters are wrong, they must wait to respond.
- Once the scene is completed, participants will discuss which behaviours they thought were respectful and acceptable as the story evolved and which behaviours were not. The facilitators will interact with the participants to help fill in any missing elements in the discussion.
- The facilitators will then invite two participants to re-enact the scene and assume the characters' roles using the props, acting and speaking in a way they think is more appropriate.

*The visualization exercises and the group game are somewhat different and will be described as they come up later on in the session.*

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- Session Two presents several scenes employing three formats: forum theatre, visualization exercises and a group game. The **visualization exercises** take the form of short stories that are read aloud to the group, providing a starting point for discussions. One of the facilitators will read out the suggested narratives, asking the participants to imagine the scenarios. The participants will not re-enact the scenes, but will simply discuss them. The **group game** will involve starting an actual rumour in the class, with instructions provided later in this document. Likewise, the purpose of the group game is to stimulate discussion.
- We suggest that you use the provided List of Rights to help to define the scope of a partner's freedom. In this particular case, we are not referring to legal rights. The terminology and suggested List of Rights were actually developed by our team. After each scenario, a facilitator will mark on the board the associated right(s) which can be found in the Discussion sections of this guide. The intent of these short phrases is to help the participants to remember and use them easily. (See Insert 4.)
- Following the discussion, print the *right(s)* on the board associated with each situation.
- Remain true to the text and avoid character stereotyping when depicting the controller and the person who is experiencing control. For example, avoid using a meek voice for the victim, and a stern or aggressive voice for the aggressor.
- Despite the fact that the character's names remain the same throughout the session, this should not lead the participants to conclude that all of these types of control can or should be tolerated before trying to take action; nor should participants assume that all of these types of control occur frequently within one couple relationship.
- Participants asked to re-enact the scene could actually play out a negative scenario which would require the facilitators to intervene. To avoid this, we have provided some guidelines for re-enacting the scene in a positive manner. The guidelines can be found at the end of most of the scenes.

- Note that presented with each scene are scene variations which are designed to help the participants grasp the violence types that are involved and to prepare for the discussion; however, these variations will not be role-played during the session.
- We recommend that the gender assigned to each character in a particular scene be respected. However, if the genders are interchanged in some of the scenes, it remains important that each gender be depicted in both types of roles: the role of experiencing control and that of using control by the end of the session.

INSERT 4

## **List of rights**

### **Session 2**

#### **Scene 1: Control through Insults**

*You have the right to demand respect.*

*You have the right to be valued and not insulted.*

#### **Scene 2: Influence**

*You have the right to self-expression and varying opinions within a couple.*

#### **Scene 3: Control through Sexual Pressure**

*You have the right to express your own sexual preferences.*

*You have the right to set sexual boundaries and to say 'Stop'.*

*You have the right not to be pressured into engaging in sexual activities.*

#### **Scene 4: Control through Sexual Assault**

*You have the right to change your mind during a sexual encounter.*

*You have the right not to be pressured into engaging in sexual activities.*

#### **Scene 5: Alcohol-influenced Sexual Assault**

*See rights from Scene 3.*

#### **Scene 6: Control through Slander**

*You have the right to have your privacy respected. In other words, what you reveal, experience or share (photos) during moments of intimacy should not be turned into rumours or personal attacks.*



## SCENE 1

### CONTROL THROUGH INSULTS

*Natalie is waiting...she checks her watch often, sighing...She answers the phone...*

Natalie: Hey Katie. Yep, we're coming... I'm just waiting for Connor... I have no idea what he's up to. This is really too much! He said he'd be here by seven. Well, at last! Here he is. Talk to you later... *Natalie hangs up.*

*Connor arrives looking stressed out...*

Connor: So sorry, baby, I know, I'm late...

*Natalie cuts Connor off in a loud voice.*

Natalie: Do you have any idea how much time I've wasted waiting here for you?

Connor: I'm really sorry, I don't know what to say...

Natalie: Well, you *should* be sorry. You're always late, it's always the same with you (*in a tone of exasperation*). You're so stupid! Can't you even check the time?

Connor: Honestly, Natalie...

Natalie: As usual, you just don't get it...

Connor: Oh, come *on*!

Natalie: We don't have time to argue...

Follow up with the discussion.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Scene 1: Control Through Insults.**

**Objective:** To raise awareness of the damaging effects of insults on a dating relationship.

#### **Types of Control:**

- Psychological.
- Use of Insults.

**You have the right** to demand respect.

**You have the right** to be valued and not insulted.

#### **Scene Variations:**

- A young adult couple assembles a piece of furniture together leading to an exchange of insults.
- Insulting comments are made about someone close to the victim, for example, a sister, mother or friend.

#### **Key Messages to Convey:**

- Insults are a form of violence and are an ineffective means of communication within a couple.
- With repeated insults a person may eventually experience lower self-esteem, especially when they are made by a familiar and trusted dating partner.
- It is important to behave respectfully towards others and to expect the same behaviour in return.

#### **Related Messages:**

- Even though you may feel angry or frustrated with someone's behaviour, certain ways of expressing these feelings are not acceptable.
- Even though insults are often spontaneous comments that are routinely used and tolerated within social groups, regular putdowns are nonetheless unacceptable because they are negative and demeaning.

- It should not be up to the person being insulted to fix the problem by avoiding offending their dating partner.
- Intimate involvement with someone does not justify insults.

### **Possible Participant Responses:**

Participants may state that the insults are trivial:

- “People talk to each other like that all the time ...”
- “It’s all in the person’s tone of voice. You can’t take everything as an insult.”
- ”My boyfriend’s like that, he’s got a temper, but it’s not his fault.”

### **Notes to Facilitators:**

- Avoid centering the discussion on the situation, but rather, place the focus on the actual insult.
- Avoid validating the view that being insulting is the same as being blunt.
- Keep in mind that insults can also take the form of derogatory nicknames.
- Should the roles of the characters be reversed in the scene, you must formulate your questions accordingly.

### **Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of the scene?
- Is this an acceptable situation? Why or why not?
- What kind of message is Natalie sending to Connor?
- How does this kind of message make you feel?
- If this were to happen on a regular basis, what might happen?
- Do you think that a person can eventually stop feeling affected by the insults and become thick-skinned? If I tell you I’ve grown thick-skinned, what might have caused this to happen?

- If it goes on long enough, can a person get used to repetitive insults, or actually end up believing them?
- If someone says that it's not acceptable, does that mean that they can't get angry?
- Must you avoid subjects that irritate your partner?
- How might you respond when someone insults you? Possible responses are: "Insulting me isn't okay." "When you speak to me like that, it hurts me more than you think."
- Do both boys and girls get insulted?
- Is it okay to insult one other if you've been going out for a while?
- Can you think of acceptable ways to express anger or criticism? Possible responses are: "You should say how you feel." "Criticize the behaviour, not the person."
- Do some nicknames have subtle negative connotations? (e.g. Pumpkin, Pork Chop)
- Is it acceptable for a couple to use derogatory nicknames with each other?
- How would you turn this scene into a positive one?

### **Two Participants Re-Enact a Positive Scene:**

#### **Ensure the following:**

- The frustrated partner must use 'I' statements and speak in a non-accusatory way.
- The frustrated partner should express how he or she feels.
- The frustrated partner should talk about the person's behaviour and not about the actual person.

#### **Avoid:**

- Dodging the topic.
- Sulky behavior.
- Sarcasm.
- Reversal of control, for example, criticizing the other partner.

## SCENE 2

### INFLUENCE

*Natalie and Connor are sitting together, looking through the newspaper.*

Connor: Which movie do *you* feel like watching?

Natalie: I'm thinking... I might be interested in a good action movie with lots of special effects. What about you?

Connor: *I* feel like having a good laugh; I'd rather see a comedy. Look at *that*, here's a new one that just came out...

Natalie: Well, *that* type of humour doesn't make *me* laugh... what about a chick flick? There's one I've been wanting to see for a long time...

Connor: I'm really not in the mood for that... What about a comedy so we can both have a good laugh... or how about a really scary horror flick?

Natalie: You know, I think I'd really rather watch something serious tonight.

Connor: ...

Follow up with the discussion.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Scene 2: Influence.**

#### **Objectives:**

- To make a clear distinction between abusive and non-abusive behaviours.
- To create the understanding that expressing differences of opinion does not constitute violence when it is done respectfully.

**Types of Control:** There is no control in this scene, it is simply a discussion.

**You have the right** to self-expression and varying opinions within a couple.

#### **Scene Variations:**

A Negative Version: One partner makes disparaging remarks about the other person's tastes. For example: "That film really sucks, just another basic storyline with the same old plot." This type of behaviour could deteriorate into psychological violence which is to be avoided.

#### **Key Messages to Convey:**

- Everyone has the right to enjoy things that are different from what our loved ones enjoy; however, we cannot impose our own tastes on them. It's important to have regular discussions as a "normal" process within dating couples. Conflicts may take place but in the absence of violence.
- It is not acceptable to use the power of money to control another person.

#### **Related Messages:**

- Within couples, it is not healthy for one person to always make the decisions. It may seem convenient for the decision-maker, however, there are disadvantages as well. For example, the partner will end up losing confidence in their own judgment or become unhappy.
- It may be difficult to give voice to your own choices, but it is important to do this for yourself.

- It is reasonable to express your own choices. Loving someone or being with someone you are attracted to is not a reason to deny your own choices.
- When your partner asks you to accompany them to an event, it matters to them, and you must give their request careful consideration and try to understand why your presence is important (they may need your assistance and support). For example, your partner may ask you to go with them to a funeral home and explain why it matters.

**Possible Participant Responses:**

- “If the guy is paying, he gets to decide which film to watch.”
- “This is easy to resolve.”

**Notes to Facilitators:**

- Stay true to the portrayal of a non-violent scene.
- There is no positive scene to re-enact in this case.
- Should the roles of the characters be reversed, you must formulate your questions accordingly.

**Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of this scene?
- Why is it acceptable?
- How would you resolve this type of situation?
- Does it always work out well?
- In general, does one partner tend to make more of the decisions than the other, or are they shared?
- What happens when your needs are overlooked (when you don’t say what you want or when you allow the other person to decide)?

- At what point would the situation become unacceptable?
- What happens when the same person always makes the decisions?
- Does the person paying have the right to decide where they go?
- Do you think that always paying the other person's way is a form of control?
- In such situations, how can a person maintain self-respect?
- Have you ever been in a relationship where the other person always thinks the same way as you? What was that like?
- Can you think of situations where it's more difficult to agree?
- Should you avoid topics that aggravate the other person?

Do not re-enact the scene.



### SCENE 3

#### CONTROL THROUGH SEXUAL PRESSURE

*Connor and Natalie are alone in the house watching a movie.*

Natalie: This movie's really good!

Connor: I can't really keep my mind on the show.

Natalie: Why's that?

Connor: You are totally distracting me. I really want to make love to you.

Natalie (*uneasily*): Um, I really don't feel like it right now.

Connor: Just relax, you'll see how great it is.

Natalie: No, I don't feel like it, and I really don't feel comfortable.

Connor: What do you mean? For once your parents are out, we should be taking advantage of it.  
Do you *really* love me?

Natalie: Yes, I love you. That's not it.

Connor: What is it then?

Natalie: (*awkward silence*)

Connor: What a great evening this is turning out to be... (*sarcastically*)

Follow up with the discussion.

## DISCUSSION

### Scene 3: Control through Sexual Pressure.

#### Objectives:

- To highlight the importance of clearly expressing sexual boundaries.
- To reveal how coercion (control) may be present in sexual situations.

#### Types of Control:

- Sexual Violence.
- Verbal sexual pressure, verbal sexual coercion.

**You have the right** to express your own sexual preferences.

**You have the right** to set sexual boundaries and to say ‘Stop’.

**You have the right** not to be pressured into engaging in sexual activities.

**Scene Variations:** none suggested.

#### Key Messages to Convey:

- You have the right to say ‘No’.
- You have the right to reject certain types of touching, sexual acts or to refuse sexual intercourse.
- You may believe that everyone has sexual relations at a young age or even when they have just started dating, but this is simply not true.
- You have the right to express your own sexual preferences to your partner, and he or she should not put pressure on you.
- “To desire” someone does not mean “having the right to demand”.

### **Related Messages**

- It is important not to pressure yourself into engaging in sexual acts when you don't want to.
- People often think that sex is a little magical: we don't need to talk about it, we can simply rely on appearances or clues that we perceive in others (for example, their way of dressing, dancing or looking at you), and then decide that the other person consents to being touched. This is how serious errors in judgment can arise about another's intentions. Therefore, you must always confirm the other person's wishes and respect what they say.
- Above all, a sexual relationship occurs between two people sharing an important moment of intimacy based on pleasure and mutual respect.

### **Possible participant responses:**

- Some may find it hard to admit that boys can find themselves in the same type of situation, namely, as victims of excessive sexual pressure.
- Many teens have difficulty expressing sexual desires to their partners.

### **Notes to Facilitators:**

- It is important to address the stereotype of the male who is always ready to have sex and never refuses another person's advances.
- While it may sometimes be intimidating to talk about sexuality, it is important to ensure accurate wording related to sexuality, namely, using the correct words and terms.
- Should the roles of the characters be reversed in the scene, you must formulate your questions accordingly.

### **Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of the scene?
- Is it acceptable to express sexual desire to your partner?
- Do you have the right to refuse?
- At what point in the scene did the behaviour become unacceptable?

- Why is it unacceptable?
- How might the person who experiences this type of pressure feel?
- Is it possible for someone to give in without really wanting to?
- What are some of the possible impacts of this?
- In your opinion, is pressure used often?
- Who exerts pressure?
- Is it true that boys always want to go further sexually?
- Do girls sometimes exert pressure? How does the person experiencing this pressure feel?
- If a boy goes out with a sexually experienced girl, might the boy think that she will automatically want to have sex with him?
- Might a boy also experience this type of situation?
- Does this occur as often for boys as it does for girls?
- Have you ever heard someone say that “no” means “yes”? What do you think of this? (Myth: Even if a girl says no, a boy can ignore it.)
- Does it sometimes happen that someone’s partner may appear to have ‘done the right thing’ by stopping when their advances are refused, but then pouts or sulks?
- What do you think of this behaviour?
- How would you turn this scene into a positive one?

### **Positive Scene Re-Enacted by Two Participants:**

#### **Ensure the following:**

- The partner who feels desire expresses it clearly.

- The partner respects the other's refusal.
- The refusing partner clearly expresses his or her boundaries.
- The refusing partner should not feel pressure in any way whatsoever, or feel guilty for refusing.
- Control should not be reversed.

**SCENE 4**  
**CONROL THROUGH SEXUAL ASSAULT**  
**Visualization Exercise**

*Ask the participants to close their eyes, sit comfortably and focus their attention while one of the facilitators reads the following scenario aloud:*

You're alone with the person of your dreams.

You've been waiting for this moment for a long time.

You've just had a great evening together.

You're feeling close and really relaxed.

Your partner is looking at you expectantly.

You gradually start to kiss ...

To lovingly put your arms around each other ...

To touch each other...

You begin to feel desire.

Next, you both take off your clothes.

Still feeling at ease, you continue to touch each other.

Your partner looks at you and says, "I don't want to go any further..."

Follow up with the discussion.

## DISCUSSION

### Scene 4: Control Through Sexual Assault.

#### Objective:

To understand that sexual assault (sexual relations without mutual consent) is unacceptable, irrespective of the victim's previous behaviour or relationship with the aggressor.

**Type of violence:** Sexual.

Since there was no conclusion to the scenario, we can imagine different endings, for example, it may conclude with the use of verbal pressure or physical constraint to induce sexual relations without consent.

**You have the right** to change your mind during a sexual encounter.

**You have the right** not to be pressured into engaging in sexual activities.

**Scene Variations:** none suggested.

#### Key Messages to Convey:

- You always have the right to change your mind even in a situation like this one. Even if you have previously felt like having sex with someone, it does not mean that you have to do so now. You have the right to change your mind right up to the last minute, and if the other person does not respect your refusal, it constitutes sexual assault.
- Sexual assault is a crime and can have serious impacts on a person's life.

#### Related Messages:

- Sexual partners should communicate and be up front with each other about their desires and feelings. This holds true even when it feels awkward and the partners don't know each other very well. Telepathy does not exist in sexual relations. If you decide to have sexual relations with someone, then it is important enough to talk about. You must confirm that the other person consents *verbally*, rather than "reading" into your partner's actions that he or she consents.

- You may feel disappointed by a refusal, however, you must not become resentful and mistreat the other person.
- If a partner is sexually aroused, the other partner often feels that they must go all the way. If, however, a partner's desires are frustrated, the other partner may then feel guilty and responsible if sexually assaulted. Despite this, you both have the right to want to be touched and kiss each other without going all the way.
- It is a myth that boys who are sexually aroused cannot stop themselves. Even when they are very aroused, boys still have the ability to both biologically and psychologically control themselves.
- Just because you go out with someone does not mean that you belong to that person. No matter who it is you are with, saying 'no' means 'no'. If the other person continues, it is sexual assault. Contrary to what you may think, you should be aware that the majority of *rapes* are committed by someone that the victim knows, whether it's a boyfriend, an ex-partner, a school friend, or your brother's buddy.
- It's important to respect yourself and not to agree to do anything unwillingly "for the love" of a partner, for the sake of pleasing someone or to make someone else happy.

### **Information for Facilitators:**

Since 1985, the term "rape" is no longer in use in the *Canadian Criminal Code*. In current Canadian law, the term sexual assault, encompassing a wider range of behaviours, is used instead. Sexual violence, an even broader concept, includes acts condemned by society; however it has not been integrated into the criminal code.

Before you present this information and for more details, read the law on sexual assault (e.g. definition, consent and age of consent).

A source of inspiration for this document is the definition provided by the Government of Quebec in *Orientations gouvernementales en matière d'agression sexuelle* (2001).

"[Translation] Sexual assault is an act that is sexual in nature, with or without physical contact, committed by an individual without the consent of the targeted person or, in some cases, such as



those involving children, by emotional manipulation or blackmail. The aim of these acts is to subject a person to the desires of another through an abuse of power, with the use of force or constraint, or through implicit or explicit threats. Sexual assault infringes on a person's basic rights, particularly their rights to physical and psychological integrity and to personal security.” (p. 22)

Within our concept of sexual violence, which has a larger meaning than that of sexual assault, we include additional elements, for example, refusing to wear a condom, or forcing a partner to assume sexual positions seen in pornographic films.

Therefore, sexual violence can encompass sexual relations that occur without the consent of the partner, unwanted sexual touching or humiliating sexual activities using force. The aggressor often uses manipulation, constraint or threat of constraint to bring about the submission of the person being abused.

### **Possible Participant Responses:**

The participants may disagree about what constitutes sexual assault.

- “She can’t file a complaint because it’s her boyfriend.”
- “If it’s your boyfriend, it’s not as serious.”
- “It’s his/her fault. He/she said ‘yes’ at the start. When you turn someone on...”
- “She led him on, she’s a tease...”
- “She brought the problem on herself.”
- Some will see it as sexual assault.

Others will excuse it:

- “She could have just avoided getting herself into this situation. She definitely knew what he wanted.”
- “It’s frustrating and hard to stop in the heat of the moment.”
- “All she had to do was not take part in sexual relations if she didn’t want to continue.”

- “She’s a slut, all she had to do was not let things go so far. She should have told him that she didn’t feel like it before it got that far.”

**Notes to Facilitators:**

- There is no positive scene to re-enact, so it is important to end the session with a positive message.
- It is important to highlight that no matter what the situation or context might be, forcing another person to have sex is sexual assault.

**Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of the visualization?
- How do you feel?
- What is unacceptable?
- If the person continues, what will happen?
- What is sexual intercourse? Is it possible to experience intimacy without actual penetration?
- In your own opinion, what is sexual assault?
- Can a boy be sexually assaulted?
- Can you be sexually assaulted by a boyfriend or a girlfriend?
- Is it a crime?
- What should you do if this happens?
- Can the victim be held responsible for the sexual assault (No)?
- Even if you promise to have sexual intercourse, do you have the right to change your mind?
- Can the expectations of the two partners be different?

- Why did the person want to stop? (No contraception, not ready, uncomfortable, only wanted to make out).
- Can a person who was sexually assaulted by a partner file a complaint?
- Is it easy to talk about our desires, our expectations and boundaries?
- How might a victim of sexual assault feel? What are the impacts on a victim of sexual assault?
- What is the best response to have when a partner doesn't want to go further? (Stop and be understanding of the other person.)
- During a sexual interaction, is there a point in time where it is impossible to stop?
- If I consent to having sexual intercourse with my partner, do I have to go along with everything that he or she demands?

**There is no re-enactment of a positive scene.**

**SCENE 5**  
**CONTROL THROUGH ALCOHOL-INFLUENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT**

**Visualization Exercise**

*Ask the participants to close their eyes, sit comfortably, and focus their attention while one of the facilitators reads the following scenario aloud:*

It's Friday night. Connor finds Natalie and tells her that he wants to have sex with her.

Natalie clearly refuses.

Connor seems to understand and doesn't press her further.

Throughout the evening, Connor attentively brings Natalie alcoholic drinks, telling himself that she will surely be more open to the idea after having had a few drinks and will no longer be able to resist his advances.

Later on, confirming that Natalie is under the influence of alcohol, Connor again presses her for sex and she ends up giving in.

Follow up with the discussion.

## DISCUSSION

### Scene 5: Control Through Alcohol-Influenced Sexual Assault.

**Objective:** To debunk the myth that sexual assault is excusable if alcohol was involved.

**Type of Control :** Sexual assault.

- Using drugs or alcohol to seduce someone without their consent

**You have the right** to express your own sexual preferences.

**You have the right** to set sexual boundaries and to say ‘Stop’.

**You have the right** not to be pressured into engaging in sexual activities.

**Scene Variations:** During an evening involving a lot of alcohol, one person takes advantage of another’s state of inebriation to obtain sexual favours.

#### Key Messages to Convey:

- Regardless of the circumstances, victims are not responsible for being sexually assaulted. A victim who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol is not responsible for another’s abusive behaviour.
- It is unacceptable and also illegal to drug someone or to get them drunk in order to abuse them sexually.
- The aggressor cannot excuse their own abusive behaviour with alcohol or drug use.
- Canadian law provides clear guidelines about consent in order to protect people. Consent is a mutual responsibility. Therefore, it’s important to talk about it to foster a clearer understanding of expectations.

**Related Messages:** none suggested.

#### Possible Participant Responses:

- “All she had to do was not drink so much. She is responsible for what happened to her.”

- “She should have suspected that a guy offering her drinks would have an ulterior motive. She shouldn’t have accepted if she didn’t want to have sex with him.”

### **Notes to Facilitators:**

- The three rights involved have already been brought up in previous scenes and do not need to be written on the board.
- Do not reverse the characters’ roles in this scenario. The previous scenarios about sexual violence were better suited to changing the gender role of the aggressor. Even though this type of sexual assault is most often committed by boys, according to teen surveys, girls can also commit this type of sexual assault, but only in rare cases.
- There is no positive scene to re-enact, so it is important to end the session with a positive message.

### **Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What did you think of the situation?
- Is the situation more acceptable:
  - If only the boy drinks?
  - If only the girl drinks?
  - If both of them drink?
- If he or she is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, is the aggressor still responsible for sexual assault?
- Do people sometimes drink or do drugs to overcome shyness? What might happen? Where’s the limit?
- What should you do if you do not know whether the other person is in any state to give consent?

**There is no positive scene to re-enact.**

**SCENE 6**  
**CONTROL THROUGH SLANDER**  
**Group Game**

The group game consists in creating a short scenario requiring participant engagement. Through the game, participants will be involved in starting a rumour about one of the characters from Session Two.

Begin by briefly explaining to the participants about recent developments between Connor and Natalie who have now broken up.

Following this, Natalie, played by a facilitator, starts a rumour about Connor.

She walks around the room, whispering to a few participants that Connor never wanted to have sex with her.

During this time, Connor has his back to the group and waits for the scene to end before taking his turn to speak. This helps to illustrate to the participants that everything took place behind his back and that he did not witness the verbal exchanges made about him.

Follow up with the discussion.

## DISCUSSION

### Scene 6: Control Through Slander.

**Objective:** Recognize the underlying roles of revenge and control in the use of slander.

#### Types of Violence:

- Psychological.
- Rumours, Slander.

**You have the right** to have your privacy respected. In other words, what you reveal, experience or share (photos) during moments of intimacy should not be turned into rumours or personal attacks.

**Scene Variations:** Cyber bullying, internet rumours.

#### Key Messages to Convey:

- It is never acceptable to cause damage someone's reputation. By starting rumours, you harm the other person and you abuse the trust that person has placed in you.
- It is important to respect the intimacy that occurs between you and your partner.
- People who get involved in spreading a rumour are as responsible as the person who started it and should participate in stopping the rumour. Everyone can help to stop a rumour by not getting involved, not repeating it and choosing not to believe it

#### Related Messages:

- To help end the rumour, it may be possible for the two people involved (the one who started the rumour and the subject of it) to resolve the problem together, provided that this does not place the victim in jeopardy. The person who was harmed can demand that the other person rectify the situation.
- It is important to be careful not to start a rumour that you may regret later in the heat of an angry or emotional moment. Once a rumour has started, you have no control over how it changes and spreads, for example, via the internet, text messages, etc.



### **Possible Participant Responses:**

- “This type of thing happens with younger students in elementary school, in Grades 7 or 8, or in other schools.”
- “If someone starts a rumour about me, I can start a rumour about the *other* person in self-defence.” (Do not encourage this solution.)
- Some teens may take advantage of a rumour to make backhanded comments about a specific person’s reputation in class or in their “gang”. “It’s true that so and so doesn’t sleep around. She’s such a prude.”
- Review these messages with the students: A rumour may not necessarily be true. Furthermore, sexual contact should only happen when you feel ready. Remind the participants to respect the rule of not naming people.
- “It’s not a big deal, everyone does it.”
- “Even if I don’t help to spread the rumour, others will, and the end result will be the same. Personally, I’m powerless to stop it.”

### **Notes to Facilitators:**

- The rumour game may give rise to responses that stray from the topic.
- Having the participants engage in the activity to actually spread a rumour in the room allows them to understand the power of rumours. This game stimulates the participants’ curiosity and highlights the role of witnesses.
- Since there is no positive scene to re-enact, it is important to end the session with a positive message.
- Rumours and slander are often deceitful distortions of the truth. The versions of facts and lies change frequently as they circulate from person to person.
- Rumours are often linked to sexuality. For girls, rumours frequently seem to be negative, for example, she’s a prude and won’t consent to sexual acts; or she’s easy, a slut.
- Boys may also be victims of rumours about their lack of experience. On the other hand, when a boy has sex with multiple partners, he may be labeled as ‘sleazy’, but this can also boost his popularity. The size of a boy’s genitals can also be the subject of degrading rumours.

- Should the roles of the characters be reversed in the scene, you must formulate your questions accordingly.

### **Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

- What do you think of this situation?
- Why is it unacceptable?
- Do rumours really exist?
- Why are rumours started?
- Why do people help to spread rumours?
- How can this be resolved?
- What are the possible impacts on the person who is the subject of a rumour?
- When you hear a rumour about someone you don't know, do you pay any attention to it?
- What can you do when someone tells you about a rumour? Possible responses: "Don't believe everything you hear because the truth is often twisted." "Tell the person that by spreading these rumours, they are helping to damage another person's reputation." "Tell the person that, for the most part, what they are repeating is probably untrue." "Tell the victim about the rumour and let them know what is being said about them. Help the victim find ways to resolve the problem." "Above all, don't repeat it."
- What do you think of the rumour "He's dangerous"?
- Could this be a situation where it's worth finding out if it's really true? For example, it's possible that participants want to warn others that it's dangerous to hang out with someone who's violent.
- What would you do in this case?

- In terms of rumours on the internet, what have you learned from today's discussion to prevent and respond to rumours about yourself on the internet?
- Do rumours occur equally in groups of boys and groups of girls?

**There is no positive scene to re-enact.**

## **SESSION TWO CONCLUSION**

In this session, you have been presented with six different scenarios where two dating partners have had to express their own rights and respect the rights of their partners while showing a caring attitude towards each other. (Review the rights associated with each situation.)

You are probably aware of other rights that were not introduced in this session that are also important to ensuring equality in relationships.

### **Risks and Advantages of Equal Relationships**

Sometimes people are afraid to stand up for their rights within couple relationships, fearing that their partner will become angry or end the relationship. (Ask the participants what their thoughts are on this.) The fear of losing a partner, or fear of what a partner may think can lead people to accept things that don't seem right or that cause them to feel uncomfortable. On the topic of sexuality, for example, partners may be afraid of being thought of as "uptight" if they say no, a girl may fear being thought of as a slut, boys may also fear being made fun of or taunted. Lastly, people may fear being rejected or looked down upon by their "gang" of friends.

With all of the risks we have just outlined, it's easy to understand why some people allow themselves to be abused. (Following this, ask participants to reflect on the advantages of standing up for their own rights.)

In a dating relationship, when the partners respect each other's rights, their relationship can be viewed as being equal. (Question: "What advantages do you see in this type of relationship?" Follow up on this by rounding out the ideas they have expressed.) For example, in equal relationships, you can discuss things together, express your opinions, your values and your expectations with each other. Direct and honest communication, equal to equal, is possible: each

partner's pace and choices are respected and each person can develop freely to their own potential. Each person will feel more at ease and the couple relationship will run more smoothly and truly flourish.

### **Relationship Breakups**

As we have previously seen in this session, at times when a relationship is unequal, difficulties may arise or persist making a breakup the healthiest solution.

Even if you are patient, you can't make someone change against their will. Controlling, violent and disrespectful behaviours are the responsibility of the person who displays them; they are not the fault of the person who is subjected to them.

As a result, the topic of breakups is important to address with teens. Often, teens view relationship breakups as failures and are willing to remain in unhealthy relationships to avoid experiencing a breakup.

#### **Notes to Facilitators:**

If time permits, a discussion with the participants on this topic would be beneficial. However, if time is short, you can simply relay the following key messages to the participants...

#### **Key Messages to Convey:**

- Relationship breakups can represent a difficult period for both partners.
- A relationship breakup is not a personal failure, but rather, a step forward in your own personal life, and an opportunity to reaffirm your own self-respect.
- No one is compelled to remain in a couple relationship.
- It's possible to break up in a considerate and respectful way.

#### **Suggested Questions for Discussion (time permitting)**

- What do you think of relationship breakups?
- Is it a failure? A victory? A common occurrence?

- Is it easy to break up with someone?
- Is a breakup easier for the person who leaves the relationship or for the person being left?
- How can you tell when leaving your partner is the best solution?
- When is it your right to break up with someone?
- Are there certain circumstances where it is not acceptable to break up with someone?
- Is it possible to resolve all problems within a couple?
- If you love someone, do you have to put up with things that you feel are unacceptable?
- How far should you let things go before leaving your partner?
- Are there ways to leave a partner without hurting him or her? Is there a perfect way to break up?
- What is the best way to break up with someone? (Respectfully...)
- If your partner is willing to change his or her behaviour and avoid doing things that are hurtful, saying that he or she is ready to do anything to make the relationship work, should you believe it? Are you compelled to remain in the relationship in this case?

### **Notes to Facilitators Regarding the Role of the Confidante:**

If time permits, you can discuss the role of teens as confidantes or as a supportive friend either to a victim or to a person who is mistreating a boyfriend or girlfriend. The “True Friends Concept” activity, outlined in the PASSAJ program, provides you with specific suggestions for teens to act upon to effect change in these situations. See [www.viraj.ulaval.ca](http://www.viraj.ulaval.ca) ; PASSAJ Program. Session 1, page 15.

## **Message Recap**

**To conclude the session, summarize as follows:**

- You can decide whether or not your own behaviour is respectful by considering each partner's rights. A right constitutes a personal freedom.
- Respecting someone means avoiding treating a person like a possession. A possession is something that you can hide, take with you when and where you like, or neglect; you can say whatever you like about it or do anything you want with it. There are people, including adults and even some teens, who treat their boyfriends or girlfriends as if they were objects.
- When two people in a dating relationship considerately and respectfully treat each other as equals, recognizing each other's rights and needs as human beings, the relationship cannot be violent.
- Whatever the situation, there is always a solution. There are many roads back to wellness.

# SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES AND EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

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Letters or E-mails

The True Friends Concept

Evaluation Questionnaire for the Two ViRAJ Sessions

Useful References

NOTE: These supplementary activities can be integrated with other courses (e.g. French class) or within other activities. These activities must not be used to replace a session.

## LETTERS OR E-MAILS

**Time Required:** there are two formats to choose from, one requiring 60 minutes and the second one requiring 120 minutes.

### Objectives:

- To identify the signs of control situations.
- To highlight some of the myths that exist around dating.
- To learn to communicate well with teens who are in controlling relationships (with either the controlling person or the person being controlled).
- To apply the concepts learned in the ViRAJ Program.

**Key Message to Convey:** Someone who is in a controlling relationship may confide in you.

### Required Materials:

- Photocopies of letters
- Pencils and paper for participants
- White board and markers to share ideas

### How to Proceed:

Divide the participants into teams of four. For this exercise, distribute one of the eight letters or e-mails to each team. As another option, you can choose to use only the first letter that represents the most common situation.

The exercise is divided into two parts.

### Instructions:

The facilitators explain the process to participants:

Today, you found a letter or e-mail on the ground. Even though it wasn't addressed to you, you couldn't help reading it. The letter is written by a teen experiencing relationship problems. Naturally, you feel drawn in given your new-found awareness on this subject through



the ViRAJ Program. So, you decide to respond even though you don't know the teen who wrote the letter. Your response must be helpful to the writer.

Before drafting your response, you must analyze the letter for the following:

- The reasons behind the letter;
- Identify the types of control that are present;
- Determine which rights are violated in the relationship;
- Identify myths or misconceptions about love;
- Identify emotions that you sense in both partners.

Once this process is complete, you can begin to share your ideas with your peers on how to help the letter writer, using concepts learned in the ViRAJ program. At this point, participants are not to actually write the response letter, but should simply note down their ideas. Participants share the writing task amongst the group so that everyone participates.

This activity corresponds to the 60 minute format. If time allows, you may choose from one of the two alternatives below to complete the 120 minute format of the activity. (The 120 minute version combines the activity above with one of the activities below).

You can choose one from these two alternatives:

1.- Each team or participant writes a response to the letter's author, which may then be handed in to the teacher for assessment. A teacher or facilitator can choose some of the response letters at random and read them aloud at the end of the session.

2.- The teams' responses are shared as follows: one person reads the first letter aloud; then, the team or teams who have worked on this particular letter provide their answers to the five points. Continue this way for all versions of the letter, then have the various teams provide the elements they noted to be included in the response letters.

The prescribed time is 60 minutes for either alternative you choose.

## LETTER 1

Hi Alexandra,

I'm writing to you because I don't know what to do anymore. You've been my best friend for the past ten years and I trust you completely. Today, I need your advice even though, sadly, you're no longer my neighbor.

OK. Here's my problem. At the start of the school year, I met a boy I've had a crush on for several months. Do you remember the tall guy in my math class with brown hair? I told you about him before. He finally noticed me. We started seeing each other in September. His name is Julian and he's so good looking! I was always a little shy around him because he's so cute and I feel so ordinary. Anyway, I still feel flattered that he chose *me*, instead of another girl.

At first, things were going pretty well. We'd often go out for walks together on nice evenings and we started hanging out a lot at his friends' places. When it came to my own friends, he said he found them too young and a bit immature. He told me they weren't the type of people he liked spending time with, and if I wanted to keep on seeing him, I would just have to hang out with *his* friends. I didn't see any problem with that, because I told myself I'd see my friends at school, occasionally at my place and elsewhere. But now, Julian doesn't want me to see my friends at all. He says they're a bad influence on me and, by hanging out with them, I'm becoming immature as well. He even comes to get me after class to make sure I don't leave with them. The other day, he surprised me while I was talking to Paul, Jessica's brother, and he was so mad that he grabbed me really hard by the arm and pulled me away. I was so surprised and told him he was hurting me. Do you know what he said to me? He said, "It's your fault. You just shouldn't have been speaking to Paul. When you're going out with me, you have no business talking to other guys. It's insulting. So just try to understand and don't do it again."

Naturally, you can imagine I won't be doing *that* again! At least he's calmed down now. Recently, he's been talking more and more about wanting to have sex with me. He says we've been together long enough and it's natural that we should finally get around to it. In his view, he says, it can't happen soon enough. Next Saturday, he's arranged to be home alone, and says if I

want to prove to him that I really love him, it would be the best thing to do and the timing would be perfect.

Alexandra, I just don't know what to do! I guess he must really love me if he wants to have sex with me, otherwise he wouldn't ask! On the other hand, I don't feel ready for this yet. What should I do? I really don't want to lose him! Plus, I'm all mixed up. It's the first time I've had a serious relationship with a boy and I feel like he really wants me, but it seems like things aren't going the way I imagined they would. Sometimes I feel like I'm suffocating and I wonder if I'm normal. What do you think? Please, answer soon, Alexandra!

Signed,  
Your Mixed Up Friend.

## LETTER 2

Hi Jake,

You're going to think it's weird that I'm writing to you, but I really need someone to talk to. I'm sending you a letter to explain what's going on.

You know me, right, I don't confide in people very often, but right now, I'm really confused. Let me start at the beginning.

Two months ago, I met a girl at Michelle's party. Her name's Melissa, and right from the start, it was love at first sight. We spent the evening talking and we even kissed at the end of the night. Since then we've been going out together. You know me, when I really like someone, I'll do anything for them. With Melissa, I must really like her a lot because I'm doing plenty! To begin with, at the start, you know, I really liked helping her with her homework, because I'm pretty good at it and I really like helping people. So, in the first two weeks, I'd go over and help her on Mondays and Thursdays. But now, I'm going over every night. She says it's better that way, because if I want to go out with her on weekends, I have to help her with her homework. Sometimes, *I'm* the one who does *all* of her homework! The other day, I wanted to go see a movie and Melissa thought it was a good idea, but it had to be *her* choice of movie. This isn't the first time it's happened. If I don't give in, it's hell to pay, 'cause she gets so mad about it!

And this doesn't happen just when we're alone. Last Saturday, the two of us were at a restaurant when my friends showed up and joined us. She kept telling Scott - you know, the good looking guy that all the girls have a crush on - that, unlike him, I was pretty uptight. Everyone started laughing. As we left the restaurant, I told Melissa that I really didn't like her saying that about me. She said, "It's just a joke, don't take it like that. You might be a top performer when it comes to school marks, but let me tell you, when it comes to making out, you're not the best. You should work on it." Then, as if nothing had happened, she said she wanted to plan an evening out with my friends next Saturday. This all seems a bit odd...

Anyway, I don't feel very good about any of this. Going out with Melissa isn't easy and I feel like I'm not good enough for her, but maybe I'm worried about nothing. I really like this girl, but I'm pretty mixed up. Please help me to see things clearly.

Signed,

Your Best Friend.

### LETTER 3

Hey Jeremy,

Do you know what just happened to me? You'll never believe this.

Do you remember that cute girl, Molly, the one who lives near Mark's place? I told you before I thought she was really pretty. Well, now we're a couple! Unfortunately, she's complicated and uptight.

All she cares about are her friends and they're a bunch of dumb, annoying girls. When I'm going out with a girl, I'm interested in *her*, not her friends. But with Molly, she always wants me to hang out with her friends. They're really stupid and boring. I've tried several times to explain to her that she doesn't have to see them anymore because we're going out together other now. But she says that she has the right to see her friends and that it won't interfere with her being able to see me too. She doesn't get it. As if she could be interested in all of us at the same time!

She's always organizing school events and it really bugs me to come second. I'm not involved in committees the way she is, and she really shouldn't be taking on so many things. We get together on Saturdays and sometimes Wednesdays, but I don't really feel like that's enough. And what goes on when I'm not around? Maybe she flirts with other guys. If you could only see how she dresses sometimes, she's so sexy... but that's deceptive because she's really uptight. You don't get to touch her wherever you want, thank you very much! Anyway, it's not for lack of trying! At first, I'd say wouldn't it be fun if... and she'd say she'd rather keep it to making out for now. But you know how girls can be, right? They say no, but what they really mean is, they'd actually like it... But Molly isn't like other girls. She's been making remarks to me about sexual assault. What! Sexual assault! I'm her boyfriend, right? I wanted to set things straight and I told her if she wanted to be my girlfriend, we had to have a certain amount of physical contact.

Then she stood up and said, "OK then, goodbye, since you don't want to be together anymore. If you change your mind, give me a call, and we can talk about it".

That girl is frigid! I almost called her up to apologize, but it's not up to me to say sorry, it's up to her, don't you think? She led me on. That's what I call a tease, bro! So, make sure everyone knows, and don't get caught up in her game. She might even try to lure you in. Has anything like this ever happened to you?

Signed,  
Your Old Buddy.

## LETTER 4

Hi Brianna!

Argh! Boys! They're so touchy! Especially one guy in particular. You probably know who I'm talking about... Wait until you hear this.

You know, I've been going out with Kevin for quite a while now. I've always found him a little difficult, but he's got a good side too. It's great going out with a guy who has a car, 'cause it costs less for taxis and buses. Now don't get all upset, I know you've never agreed with it, but I think that we girls had to put up with a lot in the past. So why not take advantage of things just a little bit?

OK. So, something happened just the other day. Usually Kevin - when I'd tell him I wanted to go somewhere - he'd give me a ride, no problem. Oh, I know he didn't always feel like it, but he'd say yes. Last week, though, he started to be a little less eager to please. I bet it's his sister's again, giving him a hard time! She's always sticking her nose in where it doesn't belong, that busy body. I've told Kevin several times now that she's not normal, that sister of his. Anyhow, so on Friday, I ask him to drive me to the dentist at three. He answers that, because of me, filling up his car is getting to be pretty expensive and he probably won't have time to drive me everywhere all the time anymore. Whoa! Everywhere! That's an exaggeration! He looked really annoyed when he said it, but honestly, I'm his girlfriend, he's got no business getting mad like that. In my head, I thought that's lousy, because I'd just told Melanie that on the way, he'd drop her off at her place. He made me look like such an idiot!

The next day, Saturday, there was a party at Caroline's. So, as usual, he comes by to pick me up. As a joke, I ask him how much I owed him for the taxi ride. He says, "You just don't get it. I just feel like you're taking advantage of me. Can you honestly tell me how you feel about me?" I'm telling you, it's his sister, I'm sure of it! I was so annoyed. Nothing more happened, but at Caroline's, he didn't follow me around like he used to. He stayed away and hung out with some other people. A few times, I saw him watching me and it really bothered me to see him acting like that. Then, along comes Melanie who says, "Well, it looks like you've lost your lap dog!" I was really upset, so I said it was no big loss and I was the one who wanted it. Kevin

heard everything! Naturally, I was joking, but he turned away and I didn't see him again for the rest of the evening. I never knew he was so sensitive!

Now, a week's gone by and I haven't heard a thing from him. I was sure he'd give me a call, but no. Tell me, Brianna, what would *you* do if it was you? It seems like he's been getting worse over time. Even if he *is* hard to get along with sometimes, there's something that attracts me to him. Do you think I'm right to still want to go out with a guy like that? Write back soon and tell me what you think.

Signed,  
Your Confused Friend.

## LETTER 5

Hey,

I'm writing to you because I really need your advice. I've been going out with my boyfriend for a year and a half already, and for some time now, he's become more distant. What I really mean is, he's become more and more, how should I say it, aggressive with me. He often pushes me around and yells, calling me names that really hurt. It got to the point where I'd had enough and was ready to leave him because I just couldn't put up with it anymore. But he asked me to come back, crying and promising that he wouldn't do it anymore ever again. He told me that he was extremely upset at himself for hurting the girl he loves more than anything in the world, and says he would never forgive himself for being such an idiot and losing me. So, every time, I've given in to his sweet talk, telling myself that no one has ever loved me so much. I always go back, and, eventually things start to go bad. He starts getting aggressive with me again. I wish I knew what to do because I really love him and I'd like to stay with him. I know he's a good guy at heart, but I don't like it when he gets violent with me.

Signed,

A Girl Who Really Needs Help.



## LETTER 6

Hi,

What I'm about to tell you isn't easy, but I really need some advice. I've been going out with a guy for a few months now that I'm crazy about. He's good looking and he's so nice to me. When we started seeing each other, he asked me to make love, but I wasn't ready so I told him I wanted to wait a while. He was very respectful and said it was no problem, there was no rush even though he found me really attractive. But for a while now, he's started asking me over and over if I'm finally ready to have sex with him. He says he finds me very exciting and that he's having a hard time holding back his sexual desires. He jokes that one day he'll snap, that all of his friends are having sex with their girlfriends and he's the only one who isn't. He asks me why I don't feel ready, and says I'll never actually be ready. He says I should just get on with it, that I'm too nervous. But I'm so scared and I don't know what to do. On the one hand, I don't want to lose him because I love him so much and on the other hand, I really don't feel ready to make love with him. What should I do? Is there anything I can do to learn to feel ready? Is my boyfriend right when he says that I'll never feel ready?

Thanks for your help...

## LETTER 7

Lately, I've been having problems and I need some advice. I adore my girlfriend, but she often criticizes my friends who are girls. I'm a guy who generally has a lot of friends, both guys and girls. When we first started seeing each other, everything was going really well. Occasionally, I'd go out with my "girl" friends and it didn't seem to bother her. She'd question me about them, asking if anything had ever gone on with them, and wanted to know whether I had feelings for her. I understood why she asked these questions and I wanted to reassure her. So I suggested that she come out with me and my girl friends. She came along but she just wasn't her usual self. It seemed like she didn't trust my friends and was more distant. One evening, after we went out with my girl friends, she started asking me more questions about my relationships with them. She said that I seemed especially close to one of them and was convinced that I had feelings for that particular girl. She resented me for spending time with this friend and even accused me of thinking about her too much. She started crying, saying that I was going to leave her for that girl. I told her that I didn't want to hurt her, but that I value my friends. I tried to explain it to her the best that I could. In the end, she asked me not to see this friend anymore, and not to go and do things with my other friends either, in case she was there. She said that, if I really loved her, I shouldn't feel pulled in two directions because the choice was clear. Anyhow, I just don't know what to do anymore, because I really love this girl and I don't want to lose her, but I don't want to lose my friends either.

What should I do?

## LETTER 8

I've had it with this pressure to strip. Every Saturday, our gang meets to dance, smoke and just have fun. But they started this idea about a competition for the sexiest girl. It started with crazy cleavage and x-rated dancing. Well, *I* personally think it's stupid. Several of my girlfriends started acting like porn stars and the guys just ate it up. I just couldn't believe my eyes. I thought that Will, my boyfriend until yesterday, would stand up for me when I told the group that we should just move on. Now, I feel down... he sided with the guys and called me uptight and stuck up in front of everyone. I feel more and more uncomfortable in this group and he doesn't understand why. I've started feeling nervous just thinking about these get-togethers. And Will is still planning on going. Am I too demanding...? Am I just jealous like my girl friend Emma says? She's the one who was going to lend me an article on the secrets of "The Irresistible Striptease." So, is it possible someone else feels the same way I do and wants no part in it?

Signed,

Cool to be *Old-School*.

## **The True Friends Concept**

### **How to help victims and aggressors**

**Retrieved from PASSAJ (2007)**

**Authors: Lavoie, Pacaud, Roy and Lebossé.**

Explain to the students that the TRUE FRIENDS Concept is, in fact, a guide to explain how friends of victims or aggressors can listen and intervene in a helpful way. By responding in this way, witnesses can actively help fight against violence in dating relationships by breaking the chains of silence, which are too often part of such violent events.

**Note:** Point out that this is the behaviour expected of witnesses, and not of the victims of violence.

#### **Information for Facilitators:**

On the chalkboard, write out the letters and key words in the left-hand column. Elaborate on these key words by talking about the words in the right hand column. You can use this discussion about how to help friends after some scenes of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> session, or as an additional session.

#### **Instructions:**

Let's imagine that a friend is telling you about a violence situation he/she is living. How would you react?

1. If he/she was the aggressor?
2. If he/she was the victim?

# [ The **TRUE** Friends Concept ]

✿✿✿ Explain to the students that the TRUE FRIENDS Concept is, in fact, a guide to explain how friends of victims or aggressors can listen and intervene in a helpful way. By responding in this way, witnesses can actively help fight against violence in dating relationships by *breaking the chains of silence*, which are too often part of such violent events.

Note: Point out that this is the behaviour expected of witnesses, and not of the victims of violence.

**ON THE CHALKBOARD, WRITE OUT THE LETTERS AND KEY WORDS IN THE LEFT-HAND COLUMN. ELABORATE ON THESE KEY WORDS BY TALKING ABOUT THE WORDS IN THE RIGHT HAND COLUMN.**

**WRITE**

**TELL**

**REAL FRIENDS SPEAK THE TRUTH**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>T</b> <b>Tell</b> it like it is.                             | → | <b>T</b> Help your friend to talk about what is really happening to him or her.   |
| <b>R</b> <b>Reject</b> violence.                                | → | <b>R</b> Clearly state that violent behaviour is unacceptable. (Be careful not to use violent behaviour to denounce violence)   |
| <b>U</b> Accept your friend <b>unconditionally</b> .            | → | <b>U</b> Judge the behaviour and not the person.  |
| <b>T</b> <b>Talk</b> to your friend about your concerns.        | → | <b>T</b> Tell your friend that you are worried about the situation and the possible consequences to both the victim and the aggressor.  |
| <b>H</b> <b>Help</b> your friend by being there for him or her. | → | <b>H</b> Be available to help, even if the victim or the aggressor is not ready to talk about it or change the situation. One way you might help is to put your friend in touch with resource personnel if it's too hard for you to hear what your friend has to say. |

**TRUTH**

**ViRAJ**  
**EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Sessions One and Two**

*Girl* *Boy* *Age:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_ *School/Group:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide your feedback regarding the two sessions...**

1. In two to five words, write down what stands out as being the most important in the two sessions:

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2. Circle the response that best matches how you feel about each of the following sentences:

a) I liked Session One.



b) I liked Session Two.



c) I learned about control.



d) I learned about violence types.



e) I felt comfortable with the facilitators.



3. How would you improve the session content? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Provide any feedback you have about the facilitators (their approach, how they presented messages and shared information with the group)? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Would you recommend these activities to your friends?

Yes ☐ No ☐

**THANK YOU!**

## Useful references

For additional informations : [www.droitsurinternet.ca/](http://www.droitsurinternet.ca/) ; <http://www.justice.gc.ca/fra/index.html> ; [www.masexualite.ca](http://www.masexualite.ca).

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