



# Student Wellbeing Hub

Understanding  
relationships/sexuality

Module **3**  
Years 7-8



Teaching resource for  
students with autism

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Australian Curriculum .....	3
Before starting this module .....	4
Using the app .....	4
Identity, relationships and emotions.....	5
Understanding self and relationships.....	5
Teaching activity 1: Identity.....	5
Teaching activity 2: Intensity and types of friendships .....	7
Teaching activity 3: Level of knowledge about me.....	10
Understanding emotions .....	11
Teaching activity 4: Plutchik’s Wheel of Emotions .....	11
Understanding attraction .....	13
Physical and physiological signs.....	13
Teaching activity 5: Healthy and unhealthy relationships.....	15
Teaching activity 6: Green lights/yellow lights/red lights .....	16
Who I can/can’t date .....	17
Teaching activity 7: Legal boundaries.....	17
Teaching activity 8: Certain types of relationships should NOT overlap.....	20
Consent, respect and other social norms around relationships.....	22
Teaching activity 9: Sexting and image-based abuse .....	23
How to say ‘no’ .....	25
Teaching activity 10: Yes and no.....	26
Teaching activity 11: Saying ‘no’ .....	28

## Introduction

This resource is designed to support teachers of students with autism. It aims to help you as a teacher to understand some of the strengths and challenges that this diverse cohort of students brings to the topic. The core audience is teachers who work in mainstream schools rather than special schools. The resource includes background information, links to resources designed for teacher use and resources that can be used with students. The main areas that this module covers are:

1. identity and gender labels
2. social norms around relationships
3. understanding attraction
4. who I can/can't date
5. how to say no.

## Australian Curriculum

### [Achievement standard links:](#)

- ✓ By the end of Year 8, students evaluate strategies and resources to manage changes and transitions and investigate their impact on identities.
- ✓ Students evaluate the impact on wellbeing of relationships and valuing diversity.
- ✓ They analyse factors that influence emotional responses.
- ✓ They investigate strategies and practices that enhance their own, others' and community health, safety and wellbeing.
- ✓ Students apply personal and social skills to establish and maintain respectful relationships and promote safety, fair play and inclusivity.
- ✓ They demonstrate skills to make informed decisions, and propose and implement actions that promote their own and others' health, safety and wellbeing.

## Before starting this module

If students are still struggling with some of the foundational issues in relationships and sexuality education, it is important to revisit these before heading onto the more complex topics within this module.

Students with autism can sometimes appear to be naive, and often miss a range of social context cues in their interactions with others that can leave them particularly vulnerable as they enter their mid-teens, when they may appear more mature than they actually are. Some students may need to revisit the basics of puberty, concepts of public/private, erections, periods and masturbation. The following resource is recommended.



The [SECCA Sexuality Concepts Resource](https://app.secca.org.au/app/login)<sup>1</sup> is an app that provides foundational content and lesson plans (free login required).

### Using the app

This app should NOT be used by students alone, it should be used with adult support after determining which foundational concepts and/or lesson plans would be useful.

In years 7–8 many students start to explore their gender and/or sexuality in terms of who they might be attracted to. For some cultures within Australia, this is more obvious and accepted than others. Within particular religious groups not just sex, but dating, are seen as activities to be highly regulated and monitored by the families. In proceeding with this module, bear in mind the school community in which you work and the policies endorsed within your school and jurisdiction. Note that it is important that all students gain an understanding that will enable them to make safe choices and keep themselves and others healthy, while respecting the legal and social issues involved.



It is possible that when talking about identity, the question of gender identity or gender expression may crop up in your classroom. Each education department/jurisdiction will provide guidelines about approaching this content area.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://app.secca.org.au/app/login>

## Other resources

- Overview of the [pros and cons of common social media platforms](#)<sup>2</sup> that teens are using
- [Reference to help teachers respond to particular questions](#)<sup>3</sup> around sexuality and relationship education the perspective of a person with autism
- Video: [Sexuality and relationships: teenagers with autism](#)<sup>4</sup>
- [National Autistic Society: Sex education](#)<sup>5</sup>
- [Autism spectrum disorders and sexuality](#)<sup>6</sup>

## Identity, relationships and emotions

In this section, students will gain a greater understanding of the complexity of identity and the rationale for some identity labels, as well as an understanding about their relationships and emotions.



[Australia today](#)<sup>2</sup> is a visual representation of the census results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Watch this video with students to introduce the topic of identity.

### Understanding self and relationships

The following activities have been designed to help students understand themselves and their friendships.

### Teaching activity 1: Identity

This first activity is designed for students to consider the labels and descriptions that they use to help other people understand who they are. Provide each student with a copy of the worksheet on the next page and encourage them to work through each question, discussing how labels are used at the school, and talking about clothing and symbols.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.common sense media.org/blog/16-apps-and-websites-kids-are-heading-to-after-facebook>

<sup>3</sup> <https://researchautism.org/sex-ed-guide/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/development/sexual-development/sexuality-teens-with-asd>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/family-life-and-relationships/sex-education>

<sup>6</sup> [http://srcp.org/for\\_some\\_parents/developmental\\_disabilities/activities\\_to\\_use\\_with\\_your\\_child/autismDD.html](http://srcp.org/for_some_parents/developmental_disabilities/activities_to_use_with_your_child/autismDD.html)

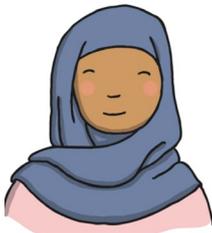
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLgKg5mmXwU>

## Worksheet: Identity

What labels or descriptions do you use to help other people understand who you are?

These labels and descriptions are part of your identity. For example, your name is a part of your identity. In this activity, you will explore a range of labels and how they are used in Australia.

1. Discuss how the labels of boy and girl are used in your school and in your community.
2. Discuss how the following items of clothing are interpreted by yourself and the people you know:



3. What do the following symbols mean?



Design a symbol for the door of a public restroom/toilet. Explain why you chose the symbol you used.

4. Write 2 to 10 sentences about the words that other people use to describe you and how this makes you feel.
5. As a group discuss some of these words and how they can make you or other people feel.
6. On your own, write 2 to 20 sentences describing yourself. Then write 1 to 5 sentences about how you would like other people to refer to you and/or describe you.
7. Create a picture of how you feel most comfortable, include the things you like to do, people you like to be around, clothes you like to wear. You can include other things too; like the food you like to eat or where you like to worship if you have a religious faith. Only include things you are comfortable sharing with the group.

## Teaching activity 2: Intensity and types of friendships

Using the worksheet and labels on the next pages, do the following activities in pairs, or as a group.

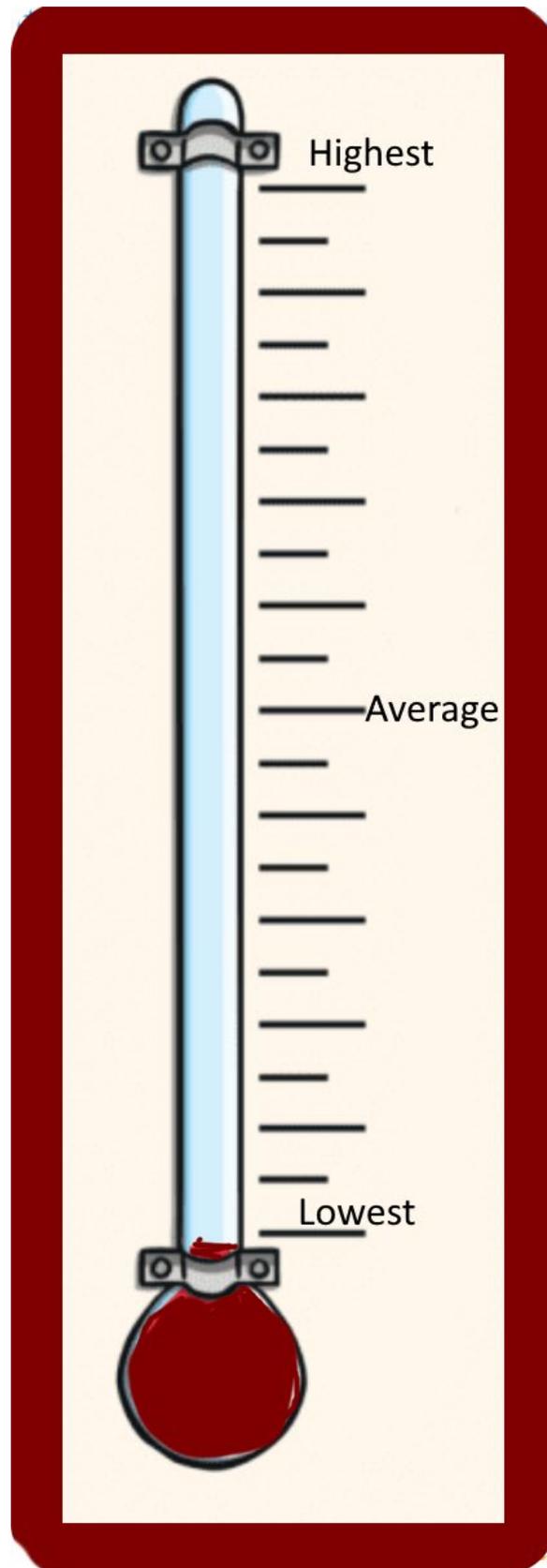
1. Cut-out the Interpersonal relationship labels and place them onto the *Intensity of feelings about others thermometer*. The least intense (not interested) is at the bottom of the thermometer and the most intense (extremely interested) is at the top of the thermometer. Encourage students to discuss why they placed the words in that order.
2. Discuss how and when the intensity of feelings for a person may change. Are there any strategies that can help to work through these changes? Use the example: 'If you know someone a little bit, then as you get to know them you have strong feelings for them and want to be more than friends, then you date/go out for a few weeks but find that you don't really enjoy being around each other and then you break up.'

### Extend this activity

Encourage students to think on their own about the people in their life and where they might fit on the *Intensity of feelings about others thermometer*. Think about the people at the top of the thermometer, are they there because of pleasant or unpleasant feelings? Which ones are trusted people and which ones are not trustworthy?

1. Ask students to come up with a plan to manage their emotions around the most untrustworthy people in their life. Without naming them, share their plan through a picture, video, cartoon, poster or in writing.
2. Encourage students to think about the most important and trusted people in their life. What characteristics do they have that they like and/or admire? Ask students to pick two of these characteristics and write/type a letter to the person explaining why they like and/or admire those two characteristics. Students do not need to give this letter to the person, it can be kept private if preferred.

Worksheet: Intensity of feelings about others thermometer



Interpersonal relationship labels

friend	support worker
bully	shop assistant
classmate	datefriend/girlfriend/ boyfriend
best friend	cousin
Mum	step-parent
Nana	Dad
Poppa	librarian



### Teaching activity 3: Level of knowledge about me

Students: Cut out the Level of knowledge about me activity labels, and arrange the label from **left** (least knowledge about me) to **right** (most knowledge about me).

Discuss: Is there a relationship between trust and knowledge about you?

strangers	school staff
acquaintances	community members
regular helpers	friends
occasional helpers	close friends
immediate family	online friends
extended family	online acquaintances
romantic relationships	online strangers



## Understanding emotions

Psychologist Robert Plutchik created the [Wheel of Emotions model](#)<sup>8</sup> of thinking about emotions, partly because he believed that emotions served an adaptive role in helping organisms (including humans) deal with key survival issues posed by the environment.

The model is designed to bring clarity to people feeling one or more of the emotions that can sometimes be overwhelming. Plutchik argued that each emotion potentially triggers behaviour with high survival value, such as the way fear inspires the fight-or-flight response.

Understanding this kind of model or structure and thinking in detail about the impact of specific emotions can be useful to students with autism who can otherwise pivot quickly into a 'big emotion' and feel overwhelmed or out of control.

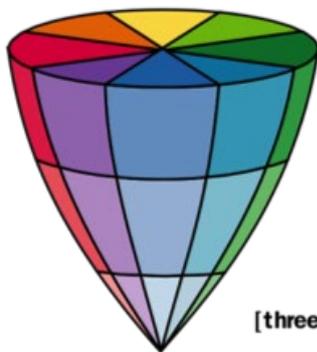
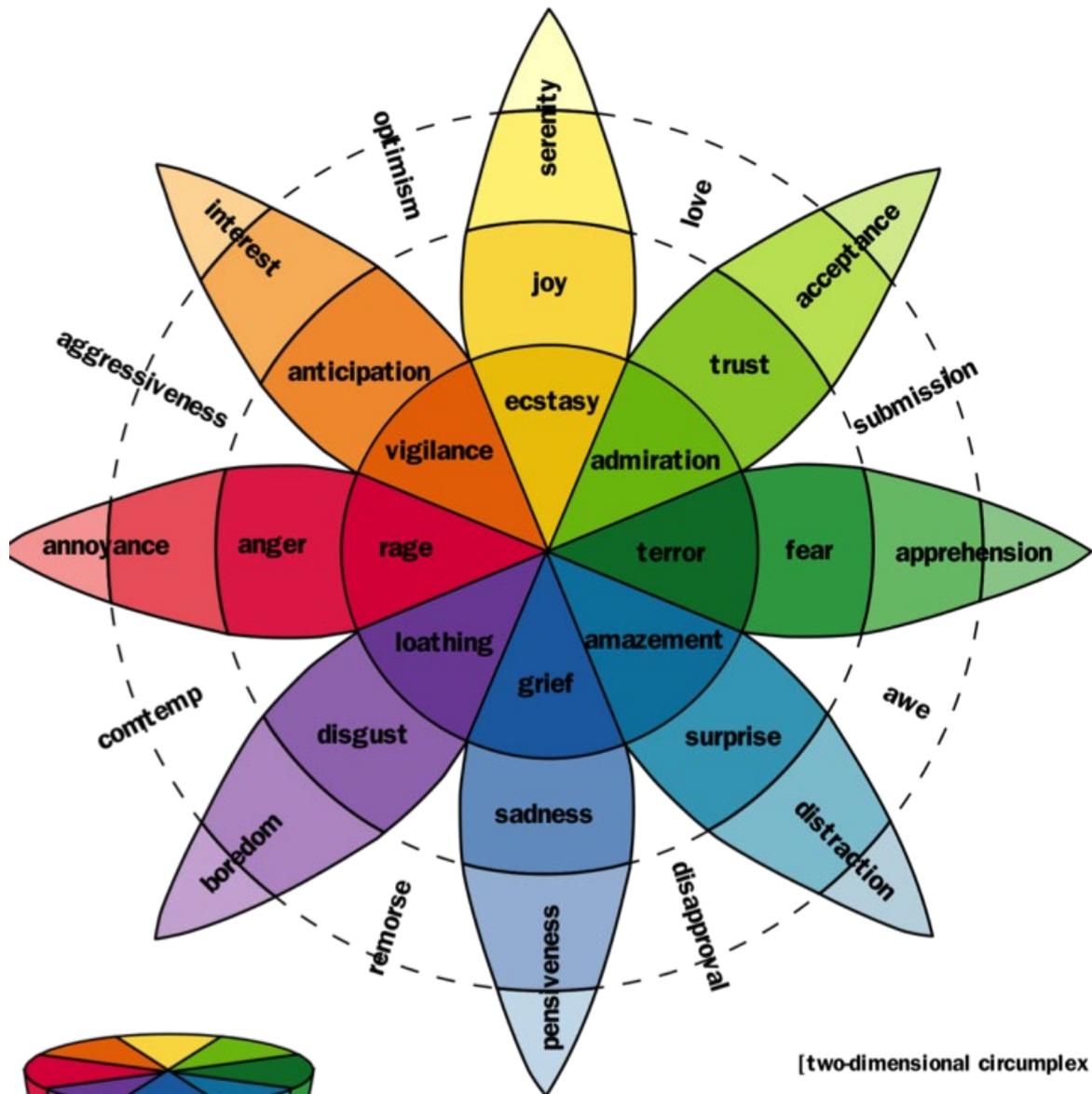
### Teaching activity 4: Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions

1. Print copies of Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions (next page) onto A3 paper, and with the students create a 2D model and a 3D model (following the diagram).
2. Discuss with the students the range in intensity of emotions depicted on the model. Facilitate an understanding that the centre of the flower (the flat part of the 3D model) is the highest intensity.
3. Ask each student to pick one emotion they are not confident they understand. Use a scenario to explain one emotion at a time. After the scenario, ask the students if they think they might have experienced that emotion and if so, when and how it felt.
4. Ask each student to pick one emotion they are confident they understand and write/dictate or draw about a time they experienced that emotion. Encourage them to use descriptive language and to detail the context/situational cues that resulted in that emotion.
5. Ask each student to compare how pleasant or unpleasant it is to experience an emotion from each end of the intensity range on one segment/petal, for example, annoyance versus rage.
6. Ask the students to think about one person and pick the emotion that they most often feel around that person. Discuss why, and if helpful role-play a typical interaction with that person and alternative actions that may lead to a different emotional outcome.

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://bep.education/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/10-Plutchiks-Wheel-of-Emotions.jpg>

Worksheet: Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions



Source: <https://www.medicinanarrativa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/plutchik-wheel-emotion-1.png>

## Understanding attraction

This part of the module covers understanding attraction, gender and sexuality. Students will understand a range of gender and sexuality labels and what these mean in terms of attraction.

As the introductory text indicated, students with autism can experience challenges in identifying the feelings and emotions associated with attraction. The intention in including content related to attraction/dating and relationships is to better equip students to protect themselves, to navigate complexities of interaction and to develop strategies that they can use in challenging situations.

Attraction is a complicated concept for any adolescent, but can be particularly hard for young people who are not in tune with their feelings and emotions (poor interoception) and/or struggle to read social contexts and cues. For students to recognise when they are experiencing attraction they need to know what physical and physiological signs to look out for and then to have sufficient levels of interoceptive awareness to be able to notice the signs. If the students are still developing their interoceptive awareness, it will be useful to revisit and practice [interoceptive activities](#)<sup>9</sup> regularly.

### Physical and physiological signs

There are a number of physical and physiological signs that people experience when they are experiencing attraction, flirting or having a crush on someone. However, some of these signs may be different for people with autism, especially those who have a strong preference for no touch or particular types of touch. It is important to let students know that they do not have to have ALL of these signs in order to be experiencing attraction, but at the same time, only experiencing one is unlikely to mean they are experiencing attraction. As an example, sweaty palms, may be an indication you are ill, in love, hot, stressed, scared or excited.

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/doc/ready-learn-interoception-kit>

## Handout: Physical and physiological signs that people are experiencing attraction

<b>Smiling all the time</b>	People often smile more when they think about people they are attracted to.
<b>Touching</b>	People often want to touch someone they are attracted to (don't forget to get consent).
<b>Sweaty palms</b>	People can get sweaty palms when they are near or thinking about someone they find attractive.
<b>Feeling nervous</b>	When first attracted to someone, people can feel nervous and a little insecure. This is because they are worried that the other person may not find them attractive too. This nervousness can sometimes present as fidgeting or playing with your own clothes, hair or phone.
<b>Blushing</b>	For some people, the blood vessels in their face dilate when they are attracted to someone. Blushing can be seen as attractive by someone who is already attracted to that person.
<b>Trying to look their best</b>	People try to look their best for people they are attracted to. This may be wearing cleaner or newer clothes, or trying to look trendy, or trying to make hair or make up look as good as possible.
<b>Sharing a comfortable silence</b>	This is easier for two people who are mutually attracted to each other as they are comfortable with each other and feel as if they understand each other.
<b>Gentle teasing</b>	This can be a way of expressing attraction when it focuses on things about the person that only the teaser knows about and/or is very gentle.
<b>Whispering</b>	If a person is leaning in close and whispering to someone when there is no need to, it can be a sign that they are attracted to the other person.
<b>Laughing</b>	Trying to make each other laugh can be a sign of attraction, if accompanied by several other signs in this list.
<b>Mirroring movements</b>	People who are attracted to each other often mirror or copy each other's expressions and movements, but in a natural way and not in the over exaggerated way that unkind people might do.
<b>Not paying attention to other people</b>	When people are attracted to someone they tend to focus all their attention on that one person.

Cooper, K., Smith, L., & Russell, A. J. (2018). Gender Identity in Autism: Sex Differences in Social Affiliation with Gender Groups. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 48(12), 3995–4006. doi:10.1007/s10803-018-3590-1

Dewinter, J., De Graaf, H., & Begeer, S. (2017). Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Romantic Relationships in Adolescents and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 47(9), 2927–2934. doi:10.1007/s10803-017-3199-9

### Teaching activity 5: Healthy and unhealthy relationships

Students: Cut out and sort each of the cards under the headings of Healthy relationships and Unhealthy relationships.

Respects me	Stands up for me
Teases me and hurts my feelings	Thinks I'm cool
Picks fights with me	Hits me
Likes some of the things that I like	Yells at me
Tells me who I can hang around with	Scares me
Lies about our relationship	Calls me mean names
Keeps our relationship a secret	Likes me as a person
Tells me no one else will ever want me	Respects what I want and don't want to do



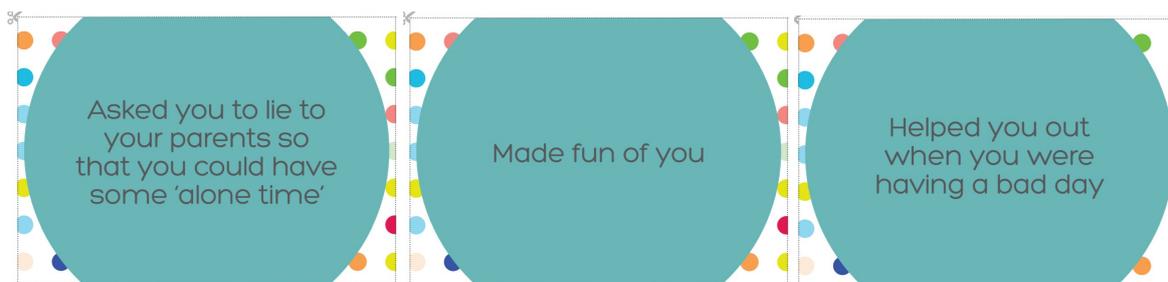
## Teaching activity 6: Green lights/yellow lights/red lights

This teaching activity is from [Family Planning Victoria](#) and is designed to unpack the attributes of healthy and unhealthy relationships.



Download [Giving relationships the green light](#)<sup>10</sup> (PDF, 14.5 MB)

This resource provides a number of scenarios on cut-out cards (examples pictured).



Source: © Family Planning Victoria 2016

While the scenarios are related to behaviour from a partner, many are applicable to friendship relationships and this adjustment can be made if appropriate. Students are asked to identify whether a green, yellow or red light is an appropriate response to the behaviour described from a partner or friend.

- Not at all acceptable. Break off the relationship and seek help.
- Doesn't feel okay and you let your friend/partner know. Keep a close watch on how things are going.
- Feels safe and you completely agree with what is going on.

The metaphor of traffic lights provides students with a sense of agency in terms of identifying how they manage the relationship. Students can be guided through discussions to be able to identify the red flags indicating unhealthy relationships, and the actions and words that indicate the relationship is healthy and supportive.

As a follow up exercise, select one or more of the scenarios that cause debate or confusion or both responses. Ask students to discuss steps they could take to alter the situation or to end the relationship.

---

<sup>10</sup> [https://rse.fpv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Activity-7-8\\_11.1.pdf](https://rse.fpv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Activity-7-8_11.1.pdf)

## Who I can/can't date

This section of the module gives students an understanding of the legal and ethical boundaries around dating and intimate relationships. Use the next activity to introduce students to the topic.

### Teaching activity 7: Legal boundaries

This activity aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills to resist peer pressure to engage in unsafe behaviours, and to know what to do instead. Print and hand out the worksheet on the next page for students.

## What does the law say I can and can't do?



**Driving:** Learner's permits can be applied for at 16 (15 and three quarters in ACT)



**Sex:** Age of consent 16 (17 in SA)



**Drinking:** Must be 18 years of age



**Smoking:** Must be 18 years of age

Questions for discussion and/or role-play:

1. What happens if you drive without a learner's permit?
2. What consequences are there for driving after drinking alcohol or taking non-prescription medication?
3. What can you do if a friend or family member wants to drive you somewhere but they have been drinking a large amount of alcohol?
4. If someone at school tells you that they will be your friend if you buy them cigarettes, what should you do? What are the consequences if you do and if you do not buy the cigarettes? Is the person someone that would be good to have as a friend?
5. If you are invited to a party and someone offers you some drugs, how can you politely refuse? What should you do next?

Next, introduce the idea of other kinds of boundaries. For years 7–8 students, it is more difficult to neatly categorise people into the ‘can touch/can’t touch’ categories used with younger children. As students develop at such different rates to each other, the boundaries can be even harder to explain clearly. As an example, some autistic students really struggle to understand that not everyone who talks to them is their friend, so they might say that the bus driver and the man at the bus stop are both their friends. When the idea of boyfriends/girlfriends is approached, this difficulty categorising interpersonal relationships can become more obvious and more problematic. For example, a student thinking that a random commuter at the bus stop is their boyfriend may lead to that commuter attempting to act as the student’s boyfriend.

### **Risks for students with autism**

Many students with autism may have good communication skills, but they are still at risk of sexual abuse. They may not have developed age-appropriate skills in predicting behaviours and understanding social cues and body language. They may not have inputs from others that assist in building understandings of appropriateness of behaviours, both of themselves and of others in their lives. They may seek a boyfriend/girlfriend/relationship but have more difficulty than the average teen in initiating contact with appropriate peers to build a relationship. Some students develop a crush or fixation on an inappropriate adult such as a teacher, carer or another adult in their life. Other students will be vulnerable to sexual abuse from adults.

### **Empowering students**

Students need to be empowered with the knowledge that some relationships are illegal and/or unethical, whilst others are a choice. An example is that students should not date, nor agree to date, their doctor, support workers, teachers but that they may choose to date a friend from school or who lives in their community. Some students with autism will genuinely want to date, while others may not want to. Either way, these students may think or state that they are ‘going out with’ someone in response to things other people have said, being set up for being teased, because they are actually going out with the person or to try and fit in.

## Teaching activity 8: Certain types of relationships should NOT overlap

This activity is intended to be presented to students. The information sheet on the next page has been written in very clear instructional language so that there is no ambiguity about what is OK and what is not OK with the people who are part of their community. It uses the terms 'dating' and 'going out with' as the words that describe a potential 'love' relationship. Feel free to substitute other terms in common usage in your context. Students with autism can be concrete thinkers who interpret things literally, so:

- be frank and direct in working with students
- provide clear visual and verbal examples
- avoid euphemisms.

### **Remind students:**

A friend is someone you have fun with, can talk to, care about, and take time to get to know. Friends should never pressure you to do anything you do not want to do or make you feel uncomfortable.

## Information sheet: Certain types of relationships should NOT overlap

### Who is a friend – and who is a helper?

You might get to know people in helper roles like teachers, support workers, doctors, or therapists over a few months or years. You might feel like you know them well – and like some or all of them. But even if you spend a lot of time with someone in a helper role, like a regular support worker or your teacher, and no matter how much you like each another, you will never be friends. This is because of the power dynamics between you, and because helpers are doing their professional job when they are working with you. They are being paid to work with you.

### Illegal relationships

You cannot date family members or support workers or helpers. If family members have romantic or sexual relationships with you, this is called *incest* and it is **illegal**.

If support workers, or regular or occasional helpers have romantic or sexual relationships with you, this is called *sexual abuse* and it is **illegal**. You can tell a trusted adult at home and/or at school if this has happened to you, or you can phone **Kids Helpline** on 1800 55 1800 to get support.

### Dating an older person – or someone you have met online

It is not a good idea to date someone who is a lot older than you while you are still at school, as this raises safety concerns. Having a sexual relationship under the legal age of consent is **illegal**.

You should never agree to meet up with someone you have met online, without a trusted adult coming with you.

### In a healthy dating relationship

You are both free to be in the relationship.

- Not in another romantic relationship
- Close to your age
- Not your caregiver
- Not your support person
- AND WANTS to be your BF/GF

(Adapted from the [Healthy relationship workbook](#))

## Consent, respect and other social norms around relationships

This section of the module helps students to develop an awareness of the importance of consent and respect within relationships and an understanding of other social norms. Most young people experience disappointment in the early years of exploring relationships and sexuality, but young people with autism may struggle to process this effectively. Part of education for students with autism is ensuring that they are prepared for changes in how they feel about themselves and others, as well as changes in how others perceive and act towards them. This means exploring the concept of before/now/later within the context of interpersonal relationships. Use your judgement about the age and developmental needs of your students in selecting stimulus resources for this topic.

To introduce this topic, watch the following two short videos with students:



[\*Sexting: what should you do?\*](#)<sup>11</sup> with modelling of what to do if someone requests a sext



[\*Get the facts: Sexting\*](#)<sup>12</sup>: Note that students with autism could potentially be confused between pimple popping and sexting. It is important for teachers to decide the suitability of this content for their students and to address any misconceptions that may arise.

As a class, discuss the issues raised.



[\*Flirting and my stories\*](#)<sup>13</sup> is one of a series of videos from [Jaiden Animations](#) that are useful as a starting point for discussing social norms around dating.

As some young people are as, or even more, likely to flirt online rather than in person, it can be difficult for teachers to explore social norms within ever-changing social media. It is important in the discussion to ensure that students explore the boundary between communicating and (cyber) stalking.

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://youtu.be/RWxAimnKupE>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaMr7y8pcmY>

<sup>13</sup> <https://youtu.be/FficU0K2KqQ>

## Teaching activity 9: Sexting and image-based abuse

The text message conversations on the next page can be photocopied, printed out and laminated or projected on screen and used as discussion starters.

Questions for the students can be along the following lines:

- Are these texts part of a healthy friendship?
- What should happen next?
- How can you end conversations like these in a way that protects you?
- What could have been done differently in each text scenario?

### Extend this activity

Follow up with other activities about sexting or 'image-based abuse'.



[Sexting: To send or not to send](#)<sup>14</sup> is a set of teaching activities – including a 'choose your own adventure' style flowchart using sticky notes.

Use this with students to illustrate responses in relation to a set of variable conditions.

The following resources may be also useful:

- [Image-based abuse](#)<sup>15</sup>
- [Image-based abuse: Your stories](#)<sup>16</sup>
- [I want help with...](#)<sup>17</sup>

Note that laws about sexting or image-based abuse vary in Australia from state to state. For more information visit [Youth Law Australia](#)<sup>18</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> <https://gdhr.wa.gov.au/-/sexting-to-send-or-not-to-send>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/image-based-abuse>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/image-based-abuse/stories>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.esafety.gov.au/kids/i-want-help-with>

<sup>18</sup> <https://yla.org.au/vic/topics/internet-phones-and-technology/sexting-laws/>

## Worksheet: Text messages

The image displays four screenshots of text messages from different contacts, arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each screenshot shows a conversation on a mobile phone interface.

**Top Left: Jo (Telstra 3G, 11:46 PM)**

- Jo: Didn't you get my last 40 texts? Why haven't you replied?
- Me: I am in bed, trying to sleep
- Jo: So
- Jo: Don't you like me? is that why you aren't replying?

**Top Right: Xander (Optus 3G, 8:25 AM)**

- Xander: Who do you like in our class?
- Me: Everyone
- Xander: No, I mean who do you fancy?
- Me: Who do you like?
- Xander: You
- Me: ?
- Xander: I like you
- Me: I know, we are friends

**Bottom Left: Mimi (Vodafone 3G, 11:32 AM)**

- Mimi: text me a photo of you
- Me: ok, I'll send you one of me and my cat
- Mimi: in bed
- Me: what?
- Mimi: you, in bed

**Bottom Right: Alix (Vodafone 3G, 4:17 PM)**

- Alix: Did you know John kissed Ami?
- Me: no
- Alix: Yeah, I saw them in the mall
- Me: oh
- Alix: I'm going to tell everyone
- Me: Why?
- Alix: Sal is going to be furious, she is going out with John
- Me: oh
- Alix: Ami is going to be in so much trouble with Sal tomorrow

## How to say 'no'

The flip side of asking people's permission to kiss or touch or date them, is that they can say 'yes', 'no' or 'maybe later'. There are lots of different ways that people can imply these things, which can be confusing for students who tend to use literal language. Students need to learn to understand various responses as well as be empowered to say no, and understand when it is important to say no.



[Consent information for teens<sup>19</sup>](http://www.murraymalleellegal.com.au/Resources/Consent-and-Sexting-resources.aspx) is a video focusing on the topic of sexual consent. It aims to empower young people with the legal knowledge to improve decision-making and reduce their risk of becoming victims or breaking the law. It is made for students with autism as the primary audience. (Note that information is based on the laws in Victoria which may be different in other states and territories in Australia.)

Ensure that students are aware of the following aspects that can support saying no:

- ✓ **Be direct:** If you want to say no, be firm and direct. Use phrases such as 'I'm sorry but I can't' or 'No, I don't want to do that'.
- ✓ **Position your body in a way that conveys confidence:** head up, shoulders back, upright posture.
- ✓ **Be clear and honest with yourself about what you truly want.** Get to know yourself better and know what you really want from life, so you can more easily say no to things that you don't want.
- ✓ **You can change your mind:** if you say yes at first, you can say no later. That is OK.

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.murraymalleellegal.com.au/Resources/Consent-and-Sexting-resources.aspx>

### Teaching activity 10: Yes and no

The worksheet on the next page is a word find activity. It has a range of differing levels of responding. Have students complete the activity and then facilitate a discussion around the degree of positiveness or negativity in each of the responses.

Ask students to plot their categorisation according to how they rate the response from the following options.

Definite	Unclear	Harsh
Encouraging	Unsure	That person will never speak to me again
Friendly	Postponing commitment	
Positive	Negative	Other
Casual	Very negative	

**Worksheet: Yes and no - Word find**

There are lots of different ways to say 'yes' and to say 'no'. Find some of these ways in the word find puzzle below.

N	U	H	A	R	D	L	Y	A	L	W	A	Y	S
Y	H	K	F	F	R	N	Y	A	W	O	N	P	V
C	U	G	P	E	S	E	O	T	O	T	E	S	K
Y	H	A	U	E	W	A	F	O	R	E	V	E	N
U	E	N	N	L	D	A	K	U	S	C	I	E	O
C	K	O	G	A	E	O	P	Y	S	M	I	P	Y
K	P	T	L	L	A	T	E	R	P	E	O	O	U
E	S	H	A	S	H	I	E	O	U	N	O	P	P
A	R	A	D	E	E	F	S	E	L	H	N	T	A
U	A	N	L	U	N	S	U	E	E	N	A	A	R
D	H	K	Y	P	I	I	O	K	A	Y	Y	S	U
H	S	S	N	B	E	U	F	U	O	H	U	E	H
E	F	U	L	E	K	Y	N	A	S	A	Y	Y	W
S	A	E	S	R	U	O	C	F	O	N	O	R	T

- YEP
- LATER
- GLADLY
- OF COURSE
- NEVER
- OKAY
- NAH
- TOTES
- IMPOSSIBLE
- FINE
- YUP
- REFUSE
- YES
- YUCK
- UH-UH
- HARDLY
- NOPE
- ALWAYS
- NO THANKS
- NO-WAY

Created using: <https://thewordsearch.com/maker/>

List any other ways to say 'yes' and 'no' that you can think of.

---

---

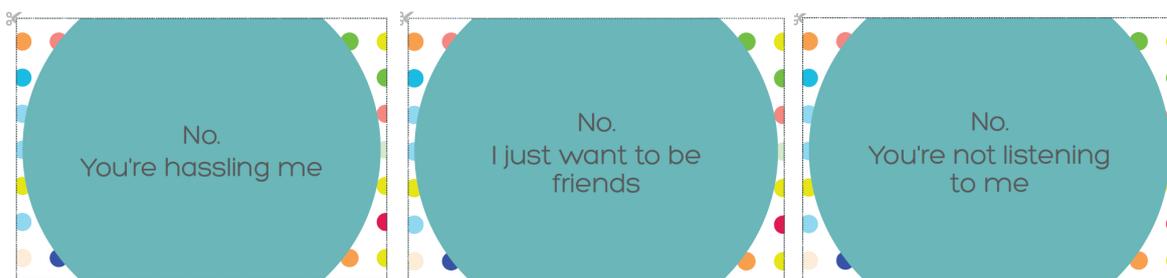
---

## Teaching activity 11: Saying 'no'

This teaching activity is adapted from [Family Planning Victoria](#) and is designed to enable students to develop a greater awareness of the different rationales for saying no.

 Download [Ways to say no](#)<sup>20</sup> (PDF, 6.7 MB)

Distribute the set of cards (examples pictured) to students along with some of the scenarios that were discussed in Teaching activity 6. Ask students to identify appropriate responses to the scenarios.



Source: © Family Planning Victoria 2016

Discuss when it might be better to soften the response, and some ways of doing this, using the ideas generated in Teaching activity 6.

Do these activities either one-on-one or in a small group to ensure the students feel safe practising the skills without fear of judgement.

### Extend this activity

Ask students to practise saying the ways of saying 'no' that they are most comfortable with. Which ones are the easiest?

Don't forget to practise using your body to project confidence. Ask students to research confident body language, if needed.

### Additional resource

 [STAR toolkit: S is for safe sharing](#)<sup>21</sup> is a free British resource to support teachers of students with special needs and has many excellent teaching ideas. One activity provides students with opportunities of practising saying 'no'. (Note that the laws in relation to sexting or image-based abuse may be different in a British context.)

<sup>20</sup> [https://rse.fpv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Activity-7-8\\_11.3.pdf](https://rse.fpv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Activity-7-8_11.3.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.childnet.com/resources/star-sen-toolkit/safe-sharing>



# Student Wellbeing Hub

© 2020 Commonwealth of Australia or Education Services Australia Ltd, unless otherwise indicated. [Creative Commons BY 4.0](#), unless otherwise indicated.