

Growing in Love Update: Grade 8

Lesson 3: Living for Others

Theme: Healthy relationships

Essential: Often children (and adults) develop very narrow definitions of the words sex and sexuality which are greatly influenced by what they see and hear in the world around them, including the media. By teaching them a framework for understanding what *is* healthy sexuality, students may then begin to practice these qualities and also identify qualities in themselves and others that may lean towards unhealthy.

Lesson:

1. On page 27 under “Working with the Text,” the word *sexuality* is explored. Encourage students to develop a holistic understanding of the term. List the following *Characteristics of Healthy Sexuality* on the board:

- Privacy
- Understanding and respect for boundaries
- Equality
- Safety
- Empathy
- Nurturing
- Open communication
- Expressed feelings

As a group, ask students to come up with a term or phrase that represents the unhealthy equivalent, extreme, or opposite of each term listed. For example:

- Secrecy
- No respect for boundaries or limits
- Power imbalance
- Lack of control
- Lack of empathy
- Hurtful to others
- Isolated
- Bottled-up/unexpressed feelings

Emphasize that the list they have created describes abusive relationships, including child abuse, incest, sexual assault, dating violence, and domestic violence. We should each strive to develop the qualities and characteristics in the first list, and look for those qualities in our friends and marriage partners, if we hope to achieve and enjoy optimal relationships.

Growing in Love Update: Grade 8

Chapter 5: God's Life in Us

Theme: Sexual abuse

Essential: Sexual abuse is all too common in our society; studies show that as many as one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused by age eighteen. Sexual abuse is defined as tricked or forced touching of a child's private parts either under or through clothing. It can also be forcing a child to watch something sexual, child pornography, or obscene phone calls. In light of the statistics mentioned above, it is possible that you may have one or more victims of abuse sitting in your class. In addition, you may not be aware of who the victims are because approximately 90% of victims never tell anyone of their abuse. Be mindful of this possibility as you conduct this lesson.

An important part of dating is learning what it means to be in a healthy relationship, as well as the warning signs for unhealthy relationships. Sadly, teen dating violence is not uncommon. We can apply many of the same protective messages we have used to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse to reduce the risk of dating violence. We can encourage teens to know their rights related to body ownership, to assert themselves and their values, and to pay attention to their instincts. Of course, the only way to completely extinguish the problem of dating violence is to raise a generation of children who either do not have the capacity to be violent, or, if they do have the capacity to be violent, do not act on it. To accomplish this, we must nurture the development of certain critical qualities including empathy, tolerance, and gender respect in each and every child.

Lesson:

1. Before beginning the discussion on pages 49-49, assist students in understanding why it is important for them to learn about sexual abuse as a type of interpersonal violence by briefly summarizing the following points (Fink, 1995):

- **It can happen to anyone...**Sexual abuse prevention skills are being taught to students in grades K-6 throughout the country because it is a serious problem in our society. One in four girls and one in seven boys are sexually abused before age 18.
- **Secrecy allows it to continue...**Older students may have missed this opportunity to learn about sexual abuse and how to protect themselves. Emphasize that it is NEVER too late to tell someone if you have been abused. Also, students may have younger siblings, may work with children, or may have children of their own some day. They may also know someone who has been abused and needs help.

- **Increase awareness and understanding of victims...**Some of the students in the class may have personally faced this situation, and these lessons may be difficult for some people. Emphasize that while covering this material it is very important to be respectful of everyone in the class.
- **Never underestimate the power of help...**Provide students with appropriate means of getting help they need both during and after this lesson. Designate one or more persons within the school community with whom they can speak should the need occur. If this person is not you, it is best to have this person at least drop by the room at some point during the presentation to identify themselves. You may also wish to do this lesson jointly with a school counselor.

2. After reading the text under “Personal Strength” (p. 48-49), ask students the following questions:

- Does sexual abuse always mean that sexual intercourse takes place? (*No, it can be any unwanted sexual activity, including fondling, asking someone to take their clothes off, taking nude photos, etc.*) What about incest? (No, again, includes any unwanted sexual activity).
- Does sexual abuse only happen to girls? (*No, it can happen to boys.*)

Be sure to mention that sexual offenders are not always physically violent with their victims. They can be very subtle and coercive. Sometimes victims do not realize that what the offender is doing is wrong.

3. Distribute the Sexual Abuse Fact Sheet to students (attached).

4. Under “Working with the Text” (p.48), as students brainstorm different things that “Violent sexual activity destroys...,” be sure to include the following:

- Can damage a person’s self-esteem, feelings of self worth
- Can damage a person’s ability to trust others
- Can damage how a person feels about their body
- Can have negative effects on a person’s faith and/or sense of meaning in the world
- Can have negative effects on a person’s ability to learn

5. Discuss the following strategies for reducing risk. Emphasize that the following concepts apply to students of any age, even middle and high school students. You may wish to use a flip chart or write these concepts on the board.

- a. Trust and pay attention to your feelings and instincts.
- b. Understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate expressions of affection, including touch. *NOTE: We don’t use the terms “good” and “bad” touch anymore, because we know that some inappropriate touch can feel good, and this concept can be confusing to children.* Explain that no touch is inherently “good” or bad” – it is inherently determined by how one feels about it. You may want to note that some touches can be confusing because while you know they are

wrong, they may feel good. This is entirely normal and does not make you a bad person.

- c. Students need to know that their bodies belong to them. NO ONE has the right to touch them in ways that make them feel uncomfortable. It's okay to say "NO" to adults or to anyone who makes them feel uncomfortable in any ways.
- d. Identify characteristics and techniques offenders frequently use, such as:
 - *Secrecy* is encouraged; "Let's keep this just between us."
 - *Bribes*, such as giving money or gifts to buy cooperation
 - *Drugs or alcohol* may be given to a young person to feel grown up, indebted, or incapacitated.
 - *Blackmail*: "I'll have to show them the photos you let me take of you."
 - "*Grooming*" is how the offender gains the trust of the child/teen, his or her family, and the community. Grooming behavior often starts innocently but escalates to overt sexual touch/behavior over time.
 - *Flattery* – "You're so mature for your age." "You're the prettiest girl in the school."
 - *E-mail*. Offenders are increasingly using e-mail as a strategy to develop a relationship with victims, especially with teenagers. Be wary of anyone 3 or more years older who asks a lot of personal questions over e-mail, particularly if they begin to send obscene jokes or pictures. This can be a way for an offender to "test" what you know about what is appropriate and what is not appropriate.

-Modified from Plummer, Carol (1997)

6. Discuss how a balance of power is critical to any healthy relationship – this includes dating and marital relationships. Ask students how one person may come to have more power than another in a relationship (*answers may include: paying attention/buying into sex roles glamorized in the media, family or cultural traditions, religious traditions, history of abuse/cycle of abuse, age*). Note that abuse may occur when one person has more power than another in a relationship – this includes sexual abuse, incest, dating violence, and domestic violence.

7. If time permits, show the video "Katie's Secret" and discuss using the accompanying guide.

8. Mention that most victims of abuse and dating violence never tell anyone, and never seek help. Ask the students to come up with a list of the "Pros and Cons" of telling vs. not telling someone when abused/assaulted. Use this as an opportunity to educate students about the short and long-term effects of abuse. Examples:

Pros of telling

- Victim will get help and start to feel better about self
- Victim will know that they are not to blame
- Victim will feel believed and supported
- Abuser will get help/will not get into further trouble/will not continue to abuse

Cons of telling

- The perpetrator may retaliate
- Fear of what will happen next (court process, etc)
- May not be believed/feel supported
- May not want anyone to know it happened
- It would be hard to tell; it may seem easier to try and forget it

Cons of not telling

- Abuser may continue to abuse other people
- Victim may have short and long-term problems (learning, relationships, managing feelings, etc.)
- Hard to keep such a big secret – may feel like you are “lying” to close friends/family by not telling
- Feelings of isolation/that you are alone with this “stuff”

Pros of not telling

- Don't have to “deal” with it/can hope that “it” may go away

8. Who would you tell? Ask students to list possible persons they could tell or ask for help in the event that abuse or dating violence happened to them. Ask each student to write the names of at least four adults on an index card. Instruct students to place the index card in a pocket or backpack and carry it around with them for the remainder of the day. Students should think carefully about whether they would truly feel comfortable asking each person they have designated for help if something were to happen that concerned their sexuality. If not, encourage them to come up with an alternative name.

9. Place a line of tape down the center of the floor. At one end of the line place a piece of paper that says “YES” and on the other end place a piece of paper that says “NO.” For this activity, this will be a “values line.” Ask students to physically place themselves on the line according to how they would answer the following questions. They may place themselves anywhere along the line based on the strength of their feelings about a particular response. (*Note: these are based on common myths and societal attitudes about date rape*):

- Does the way a woman or man dresses mean s/he wants sex?
- If s/he doesn't fight back?
- Does no sometimes mean yes?
- When a person pays for dinner, does s/he deserve anything in return (kiss, fondling, sex)?
- If the “victim” was drinking, is s/he responsible for being raped?
- Must kissing and touching always lead to sex?
- Are some women just “asking for trouble”?
- If a girl/boy really likes you, they'll want to “fool around”/have sex with you.
- Is a man/woman at fault if s/he goes out alone at night and gets raped?

- Sexual assault is no big deal – the media has blown in all out of proportion.
- If a friend has been sexually assaulted or abused, you should encourage them to tell someone.
- The victim is never to blame.

10. Finally, review and explore basic body ownership concepts, including **1) You have the right to say “no” to ANY kind of touching in ANY situation because your body belongs to you and only you and, 2) touching should never be a secret.**

Sexual Abuse Fact Sheet

- Sexual abuse doesn't have to involve sexual intercourse – it can also include touching, fondling, prostitution, pornography, and obscene phone calls.
- Studies indicate that one in four girls and one in six boys have experienced some type of sexual abuse before age 18.
- Sexual offenders are not usually strangers to children or teens – approximately 90 percent are friends, acquaintances, family members, teachers, camp counselors, etc.
- Offenders often “groom” their victims, building up trust and then betraying that trust. Sometimes offenders lead children to believe that the abuse was the child's fault. *Children are NEVER to blame for the abusive actions of adults.*
- Studies of offenders show that there is no “typical offender” – they often look just like anyone else. In fact, they can be very charming. Many attend church and are active in their communities. Many are married and have children of their own.
- Victims of sexual abuse may cope in many ways. Some victims may appear withdrawn, while others may be over-achievers in school. You cannot always tell by someone's appearance or behavior whether or not they have been abused, although victims of sexual abuse are typically not as involved with their peers as other children.
- Sexual abuse can have many long-term effects on its victims. These include problems with self-esteem and self-concept, problems with interpersonal relationships, and problems with school and academics. Sexual abuse can sometimes even lead to violent or self-destructive behaviors.
- It is believed that up to 90% of victims never tell anyone about their abuse. Many people who do tell do not tell right away, but rather wait weeks, months, or – in many cases – years, to disclose. **It is never too late to tell someone about abuse.**

Growing in Love Update: Grade 8

Chapter 6: Life in the Spirit

Theme: Limits to obedience

Essential: Sadly, some caregivers interpret and use biblical scripture wrongly to justify abuse. “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12) is one example of a passage that children may be led to interpret as absolute. Children, however, are created with rights of their own – one of them being the right to say no to touch. Obeying authority never means accepting or going along with something that you know is wrong.

Lesson: Simply remind students that obeying authority never means having to accept or go along with something that you know is wrong.

Family Resource

Growing in Love: Grade 8

Lesson 3 – Healthy Relationships

Often children (and adults) develop very narrow definitions of the words sex and sexuality which are greatly influenced by what they see and hear in the world around them, including the media. By understanding the many characteristics that make up healthy sexuality/healthy relationships, students may begin to practice these qualities and also identify qualities in themselves and others that may lean towards unhealthy.

Lesson Summary

Healthy sexuality includes:

- Privacy
- Understanding and respect for boundaries
- Equality
- Safety
- Empathy
- Nurturing
- Open communication
- Expressed feelings

Home Activity

All of us have relationships, most of which are not sexual. Yet all quality relationships share the characteristics above. Consider the relationships in your life, those which you model for your child. Do they contain these characteristics? If your child sees relationships that are unhealthy, whether in real life or in the media, talk with them about those parts that are unhealthy. For example, in a situation of domestic violence, do both partners treat each others as equal? Do both partners feel safe? Do both partners have empathy (the ability to understand one another's feelings) towards one another? As your child becomes more familiar with the characteristics of healthy relationships they'll be more likely to identify if they come to be in a relationships that begins to become unhealthy. You'll also have given them a language for talking about the problem with their partner and other people in their lives who support them.

Family Resource

Growing in Love: Grade 8

Lesson 5 – Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is all too common in our society. Studies show that as many as one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused by age eighteen. Sexual abuse is defined as tricked or forced touching of a child's private parts either under or through clothing. It can also be forcing a child to watch something sexual, child pornography, or obscene phone calls. Sadly, 90% of victims never tell anyone of their abuse and never receive help.

Sadly, teen dating violence is also not uncommon. We can apply many of the same protective messages we have used to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse to reduce the risk of dating violence. We can encourage teens to know their rights related to body ownership, to assert themselves and their values, and to pay attention to their instincts. Of course, the only way to completely rid ourselves of the problem of dating violence is to raise a generation of children who either do not have the capacity to be violent, or, if they do have the capacity to be violent, do not act on it. To accomplish this, we must nurture the development of certain critical qualities including empathy, tolerance, and gender respect in each and every child.

Lesson Summary

- Students define sexual abuse
- Students learn some basic statistics regarding the prevalence of sexual violence, characteristics of victims and offenders
- Students discuss the balance of power in relationships
- Students discuss the ways in which sexual violence can be hurtful
- Students learn strategies for reducing risk of sexual abuse, assault, and dating violence
- Students discuss the “pros” and “cons” of telling vs. not telling

Home Activity

Ask your child to share with you what they learned in class. If your child sees or hears news stories or programs about sexual predators, talk to them about what it means and ask questions to encourage them to think about their risk. Ask if they could ever imagine a slightly older teacher, coach, etc. expressing romantic interest in one of their peers. What would they think of this? Would it be flattering? Are there any “grey areas” where this would be okay? *No*. What would they do?

Family Resource

Growing in Love: Grade 8

Lesson 6 – Limits to Obedience

Sadly, some adults use their authority wrongly to justify abuse. Children, however, are created with rights of their own – one of them being the right to say no to touch. Obeying authority never means accepting or going along with something that you know is wrong.

Lesson Summary

- Students are reminded that obeying authority never means accepting or going along with something that you know is wrong.

Home Activity

Always encourage your child to think first before acting. At this age they are more influenced by peers than adults, yet authority figures can continue to play dominant and forceful roles in their lives. It is never too late to tell someone about abuse.