



Parents / Guardians

Welcome to EqualityRules.ca, a website brought to you by the Government of Ontario. The goal is to help educate your child about the importance of healthy, equal relationships. As adults, we know that there are right and wrong ways to treat one another, but sometimes it's hard for children to know how to speak up for their friends when they are being treated unfairly. That's where this site can help. Through interactive scenarios and quizzes your kids learn the importance of respecting themselves and others, as well as ways in which they can stand up for their friends in various situations. With your help, we can ensure that all kids understand and practice healthy, equal relationships.

Here are some tips for helping your children make positive healthy choices:

- **Get informed.** Being informed will strengthen your ability to talk to your kids about the issue. Learn about the characteristics of a healthy, equal relationship. Think about key elements such as respect, trust and friendship. Teach your kids that being in healthy relationships, where each person is treated as an equal, feels great.
- **It's never too early.** Introduce your son or daughter to the concept of healthy relationships before they start dating. Replace harmful messages about "what it means to be a guy" and "what it means to be a girl" with positive messages about the many opportunities available to everyone, both girls and guys. Demonstrate that girls are just as valuable as boys by treating your kids fairly. Assign chores based on age and maturity rather than on the gender of the child. Make the rules fair. If your 12 year-old daughter has to learn to do her own laundry, the same rule should apply to your son when he turns 12.
- **Keep talking about it.** The more you talk about healthy, equal relationships, the more comfortable your kids will be talking to you. Look for opportunities to talk about the attitudes and behaviours that lead to healthy, equal relationships. Talk about what you see on TV, the internet and in movies. Ask them to think of examples of healthy and unhealthy relationships that they have seen.

- **Create the space.** Provide an open and safe environment for your son or daughter to talk about relationship issues. Always make the time to listen and respond when they ask questions or share their thoughts. Giving them your undivided attention sends the message that what they have to say is important to you. Discuss the issues rather than give a lecture. Ask questions like, "Are any of your friends dating?", "What kind of guy would make a good boyfriend?" and "How do you show someone that you like them?" Listen patiently, ask lots of questions and let them come up with their own conclusions.
- **Take an interest.** Listen to your kids' music, watch their favourite TV shows with them, read their magazines, check out some websites and play their video games with them. It's a good way to understand the space they're in. Participate in their activities. This sends a message that you are interested in their lives. Encourage your kids to spend time with their friends in your home. This gives you insight into the issues they are dealing with and the messages they are receiving about relationships.
- **Walk the talk.** Show your kids how to have a healthy, equal relationship. Talk through disagreements with your partner in front of your kids, showing them that conflicts can be resolved through a calm discussion, without yelling or name-calling. Show them how you solve problems together by listening respectfully to each other's ideas.
- **Practice makes perfect.** It is important for your kids to know how to deal with difficult situations before they happen. What will your daughter do if in the future she is ever pressured to have sex? How will your son respond if his friends push him to be controlling and disrespectful to girls? Develop realistic scenarios together and discuss how your son or daughter would handle them. Your kids will gain practical experience and confidence in themselves.
- **Talk to your sons and daughters.** Both boys and girls get ideas about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman from many different places. Sometimes these messages give kids the idea that boys and girls are not equal. Harmful ideas like these set the stage for unhealthy, unequal and sometimes abusive relationships. Teach your sons and daughters that boys and girls are of equal value.
- **Keep your eyes and ears open.** Look for warning signs that indicate your child is in an unhealthy relationship. Get to know who they're seeing by inviting them into your home. Pay attention to their interaction with others. Watch for controlling behaviour, criticism and jealousy. Be aware of changes in your child's behaviour. Some girls who are in an unhealthy relationship become anxious or depressed. Often they withdraw from their normal activities. Some boys who are

in an unhealthy relationship become angry easily and change their moods quickly.

- **Know what to do.** If you suspect that your son or daughter is in an abusive relationship, don't be afraid to talk to them about it. Tell them about your concerns and let them know that you are there to support them. Ask how they feel about their relationships and listen without judgement. Focus on your child's feelings. If they don't want to talk to you, help them to find another trusted adult. Provide them with resources such as confidential counselling services and crisis line information.
- **Find out more.** For further information on how to talk to your child about building healthy equal relationships and on the prevention of violence against women and girls, explore the following websites:

Ontario Women's Directorate

(www.ontariowomensdirectorate.gov.on.ca/youth/zone.html)

This site has information on relationships, body image and abuse issues

Choose Respect

(www.chooserespect.org)

Choose Respect is a national U.S. initiative to help adolescents form healthy relationships to prevent dating abuse before it starts.

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

(www.cdc.gov/ncipc)

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) works to reduce morbidity, disability, mortality, and costs associated with injuries. This site has information about research on dating violence.

Aboriginal Youth Network

(www.ayn.ca)

This site has information about abuse.

White Ribbon Campaign

(www.whiteribbon.com)

This site has on-line polls, posters and information about preventing violence against women.

Teen Relationships

(www.teenrelationships.org)

This site has information about abuse, healthy and unhealthy relationships and warning signs.

Kids Help Phone

(www.kidshelpphone.ca)

This site has information on healthy and unhealthy relationships, warning signs of abuse and where to get help.

Making Waves

(www.mwaves.org)

This site has information on dating violence, healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, and warning signs of abuse.

Violence Intervention Project

(www.violenceinterventionproject.com)

This site is part of a youth-led violence prevention project and contains information about abuse.

See it and Stop it Campaign

(www.seeitandstopit.org/pages)

This site has information about abuse, healthy and unhealthy relationships and warning signs of abuse.

Men for Change

(www.chebucto.ns.ca/CommunitySupport/Men4Change)

This site has information about healthy relationships, promoting positive masculinity and ending sexism and violence.

Working with Men and Boys

(toolkit.endabuse.org/Home)

This site has information about how to work with men and boys to prevent gender-based violence.

Connect

(www.connect-endabuse.org/index.php?page=current_issue)

This site has information for parents on how to talk to their kids about violence and how to promote healthy relationships.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

(www.camh.net/tips_for_parents_teens.html)

This site has information for parents on promoting healthy relationships.