



Action Canada
for Sexual Health & Rights

Comprehensive Sex-Ed Resource

Relationship Mapping Activity

Grade Level: 6+

This activity is from **BEYOND THE BASICS**, a resource for educators on sexuality and sexual health.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES


- 1 Identify what a healthy relationship feels/looks like.
- 2 Critically evaluate their relationships in terms of what might promote or hinder connection.
- 3 Learn how to articulate and negotiate their relationship needs and boundaries.

Learn more about *Beyond the Basics* at www.actioncanadashr.org/beyond
For more activities like this one, go to www.actioncanadashr.org/sex-ed-activities

Instructions



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1. Provide art and drawing supplies and paper. Ask students to draw a circle and label it either “Me,” their name, or draw in a caricature of themselves. You can demonstrate an example for them on the board.
2. Add other circles as per figure 7A on page 3. Ask students to use the whole page.
3. Ask students to close their eyes and think about the most important people in their lives. With eyes still closed, ask them to reflect on who these people are and what makes them important.
4. Ask students to open their eyes and choose 4 to 8 people in their lives who they consider to be important. Explain that importance can be related to emotional closeness, their role (e.g., who they are to you), and/or time spent together. Importance does not always mean the people you feel the strongest connection to or the most supported by. Emphasize that it is rare for one person to satisfy all of a person’s relationship needs. That is why it is important to cultivate different kinds of relationships with different kinds of people (i.e., friendships, mentorships, etc.).
5. Ask students to map each person in the drawing according to how close they are. Use a circle and an initial or a symbol (see figure 7B on page 3). Emphasize that students should complete their drawings by thinking about how they are feeling today, recognizing that feelings about people and relationships can change day to day, month to month, etc.
6. Draw lines from “Me” toward each person on the map. The line can be solid (strong connection), dotted (weak connection) or zigzagged (conflicted connection). See figure 7C on page 3.
7. Add a “+” and/or a “-” on each line to show whether the relationship is supportive or draining. Supportive relationships where you get care, insight, and feel safe are “+”. Relationships where you give and feel depleted are “-”. Some relationships are both. See figure 7D on page 3.
8. Remind students that this is a snapshot of their relationships and relationship “orbit” today. It is not the past or the future. Give students some time to finish up their drawings. Then, ask students to privately reflect on their drawings/relationship orbits by turning over their paper and either writing or drawing their answers to the following questions:
 - What do you notice about your orbits today?
9.  Optional: Have students use the written or drawn reflections to create a poem about one of the relationships in their lives. The poem can be kept private or presented to the class (as long as there is no identifying information).
10. Debrief as a class using the following prompts:
 - What can we do to change distances with people in our orbits? How can we invite them closer? How can we make more distance?
 - Strong connections do not always feel supportive and weaker connections do not always mean there is no trust. What do you think that means?
 - How would it feel if everyone in your orbit was in Circle 1? What if they were all in Circle 3?
 - What do you think might happen if you did this activity once every year?

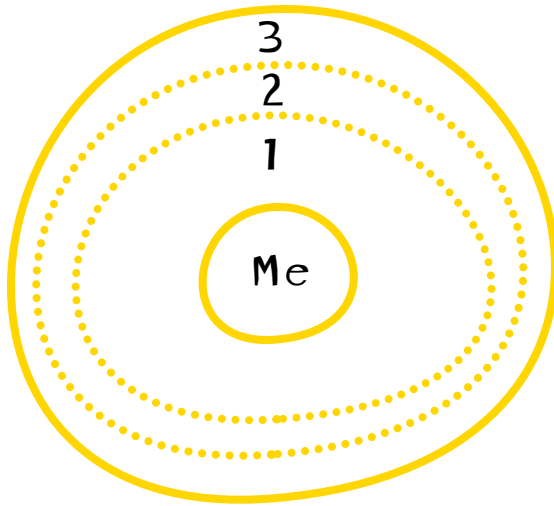


Figure 7A

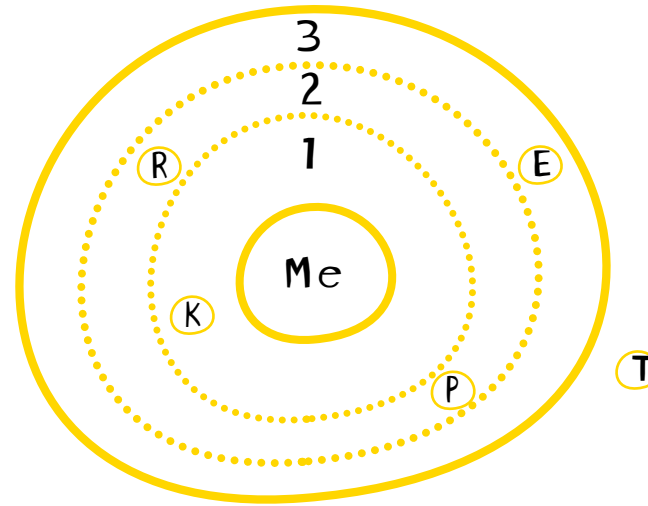


Figure 7B

CIRCLE 1: Very close relationships
CIRCLE 2: Close relationships but not as close as Circle 1
CIRCLE 3: Impersonal relationships
 Outside of solid line: People you do not trust and want strong boundaries with

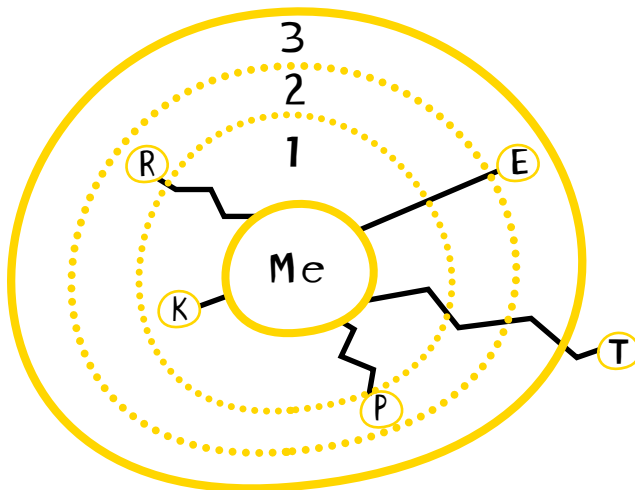


Figure 7C

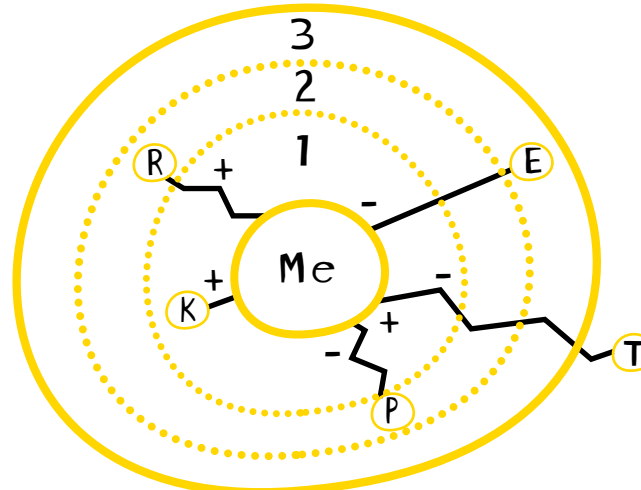


Figure 7D

Background Information for Educators

During adolescence, young people are learning to navigate different types relationships, including friendships. They are in a process of discovering who they want to be around and why; they are weighing the benefits of relationships, how some social connections feel really good and others, not so good. It is a process of learning by trial and error. While you cannot control the relationship choices of your students, you can provide them with the skills to evaluate and make decisions about the kinds of relationships that they want in their lives. You can provide skills that will help them cultivate more of the types of friendships that they want, while helping them set and communicate boundaries. You can also provide students with information to determine the ingredients for a healthy relationship.

Friendships, peer social dynamics, and relationships in general are significantly influential during adolescence. While this could be said of any point in life, the reality

for young people is that they are experimenting with what it means to develop separately from family and to make stronger ties with peers. The connections that young people make and maintain during this time are both sources of support and sources of stress. The ability to identify and critically evaluate these connections are important first steps toward articulating and negotiating relationship needs and boundaries.

The activities in this module are meant to help students see the complexity of relationships. Relationships are not black and white—they are not healthy or unhealthy—relationships often include both qualities. Identifying qualities of a relationship that feel positive and healthy, as well as identifying qualities that feel negative and unhealthy, can help determine which relationships you want in your life and which you do not. It is not always possible to entirely disconnect from a person/relationship (i.e., a sibling or a

parent) but you can learn to communicate needs and develop boundaries to help navigate the relationship.

Learning how to communicate needs is different than expecting 100% of your needs to be met 100% of the time. Learning how to communicate your needs is about learning how to communicate expectations while listening to the other person's needs and expectations. Part of listening to the other person's needs is being aware that they may set a boundary that could lead to feelings of rejection and emotional pain. Being in a relationship is about negotiating how you can best meet each other's expectations in ways that are mutually supportive, respectful, and fulfilling.

Educator Answer Key



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- You can invite people closer by reaching out. You can do this by telling them that you would like to spend more time together. You could also talk with them more often, invite them to hang out with you, invite them to an event, and/or activity that you enjoy. You can create more distance by telling them that you would like to take some distance in the relationship. You could also hang out with them less often, and/or find activities to do that are not associated with them, and/or spend more time with other people who you want to bring in closer.
- There are many different kinds of connections that you can have and these might not always feel supportive. For instance, you can have a strong romantic connection with someone but you may not feel emotionally supported. Likewise, you could have a childhood friend whose connection has grown weak over the years and yet you trust them with your life. Trust is something that is often built and earned, not something that happens because you have a strong connection with a person.
- Everyone is different, meaning that people have different preferences when it comes to relationships. Some people might thrive if all of their connections are in Circle 1, while others might thrive if all of their connections are in Circle 3. People often thrive from a mix. It is important to cultivate different kinds of relationships and sometimes this means that the connections will be various degrees of strong or weak as is appropriate with the kinds of relationships being developed. Having every relationship in Circle 1 might seem great objectively but it can become difficult to sustain and draining to keep up close and strong connections with everyone in your life all of the time. It might feel draining to have everyone in Circle 1 and it might feel lonely or isolating to have everyone in Circle 3.
- You might be able to see how your relationships change year to year. You might be able to see which relationships stay relatively stable and which do not. You might be able to track how your relationships change and how they stay the same. This kind of reflection can be helpful to see if and how your relationships have grown and if you have succeeded in bringing in people you want closer and distancing yourself from people you want space from.

BEYOND THE BASICS

A Resource for Educators on Sexuality and Sexual Health



Beyond the Basics is a resource for educators on sexuality and sexual health. It offers the tools to teach young people about sexuality and sexual health from a sex positive, equity, and human rights perspective. It covers anatomy, consent, healthy relationships, and more! Choose from a wide range of chapters, modules, and activities that fit the different age, grade, and curricular goals for your students.

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