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What You'll Learn

1. Describe behaviors typical of people who relate in harmful ways, including the people pleaser, the enabler, the clinger, the fixer, the distancer, the controller, the center, the abuser, the liar, and the promise breaker. (p. 179)
2. Explain why some people get involved in harmful relationships. (p. 182)
3. Evaluate the negative effects harmful relationships might have on health status. (p. 183)
4. Outline steps to take to end or change harmful relationships. (p. 184)

Why It's Important

Being in a harmful relationship can have a negative effect on a person's health status, so teens must evaluate their relationships to ensure they are positive.

Key Terms

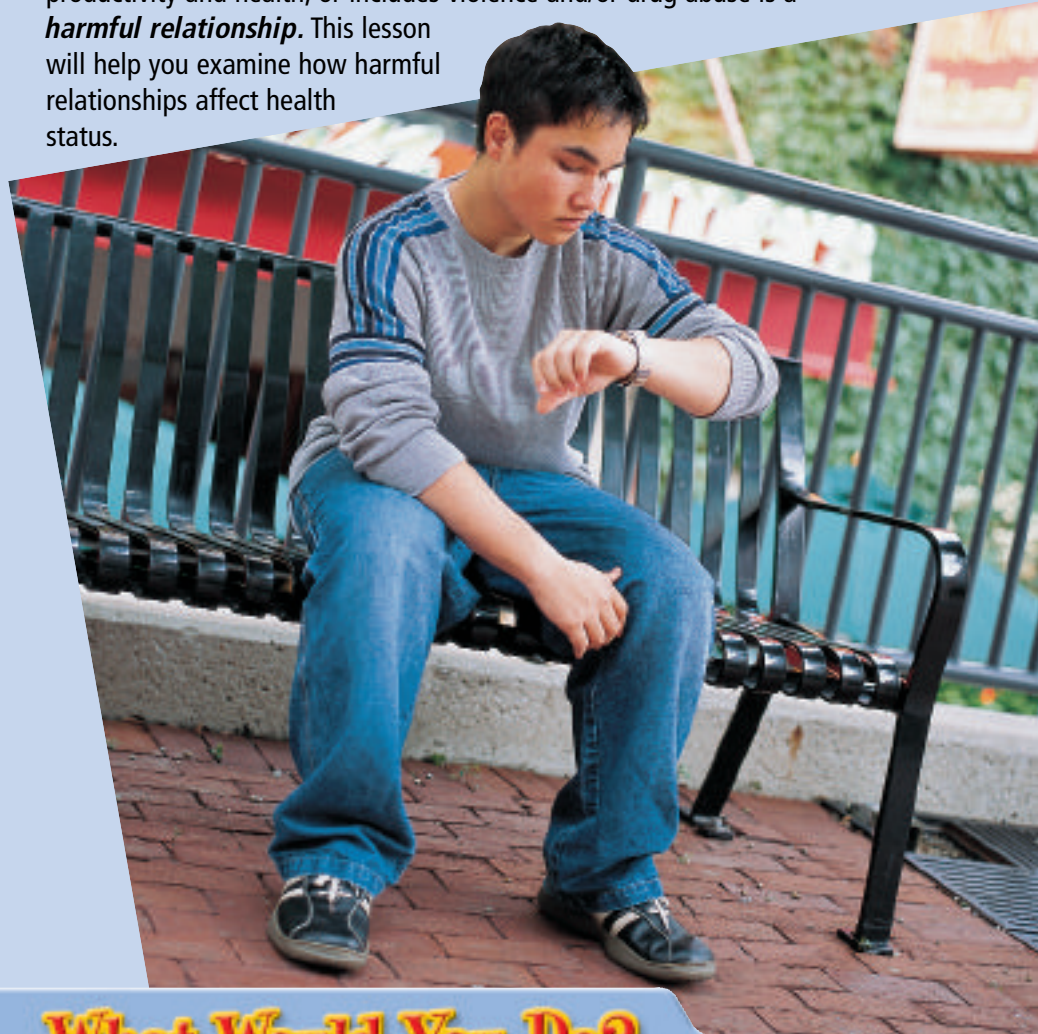
- people pleaser
- enabler
- clinger
- fixer
- distancer
- controller
- center
- abuser
- liar
- promise breaker

Recognizing Harmful Relationships

HEALTH GOAL

- I will recognize harmful relationships.

A connection a person has with another person is a **relationship**. A relationship that promotes self-respect, encourages productivity and health, and is free of violence and/or drug abuse is a **healthful relationship**. A relationship that harms self-respect, interferes with productivity and health, or includes violence and/or drug abuse is a **harmful relationship**. This lesson will help you examine how harmful relationships affect health status.



What Would You Do?

Writing About Recognizing Harmful Relationships Suppose you are in a relationship with someone who does not show respect for you. The person might be late most of the time or be a “no show.” The person might talk about you behind your back. After reading the information about changing harmful relationships on page 184, outline steps you might take to change this harmful relationship in your health journal.



Health TEKS covered by Lesson 17: 11, 4A, 7J, 8A, 9A, 14A, 16A

Harmful Relationships

A profile is a brief description of something or someone. The following ten profiles are brief descriptions of people who relate to others in harmful ways. Each is identified by a name others might use to refer to the person described. These profiles help you understand ways harmful behaviors can sabotage your chance to have healthful relationships. Do any of these profiles describe you or anyone you know?

Ten Profiles of People Who Relate in Harmful Ways

The people pleaser A person who constantly seeks the approval of others is the *people pleaser*. A people pleaser will do almost anything to be liked. This may include harmful behavior, such as using alcohol, using drugs, or engaging in sexual activity to please someone else. Often, other people describe a people pleaser as a “doormat” because they can walk all over the people pleaser with no consequences.

The people pleaser often lacks the self-confidence it takes to tell others what he or she thinks, wants, or needs. The people pleaser sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships because he or she does not demand respect from others.

The enabler A person who supports the harmful behavior of others is the *enabler*. The enabler may deny another person’s harmful behavior. For example, the enabler may overlook another person’s drinking, gambling, or cheating. The enabler may make excuses or cover up for another person. The enabler also may contribute to another person’s harmful behavior. Sometimes it is much easier to act as an enabler than to stand up to a friend

and tell him or her that his or her behavior is unacceptable.

A true friend will find the strength to be honest about another’s harmful behavior. The enabler sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships when he or she does not expect other people to behave in responsible ways. As a result, the enabler cannot meet his or her own needs for attention, affection, and support.

The clinger A person who is needy and dependent is the *clinger*. The clinger feels empty inside and constantly turns to another person to feel better. When the clinger has this person’s attention or affection, the clinger feels better, but no amount of attention or affection keeps the clinger fulfilled.

A relationship with a clinger is often very difficult because a clinger can be very demanding of others. The friend of a clinger can feel suffocated by the clinger’s need for time and attention. The clinger sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships by not giving other people space. When people pull away, the clinger feels threatened and clings even more.

Health TEKS

8A (covered on page 179): Evaluate positive and negative effects of various relationships on physical and emotional health....

Quick Quiz:

How does a harmful relationship affect a person’s health status?

Did You Know?

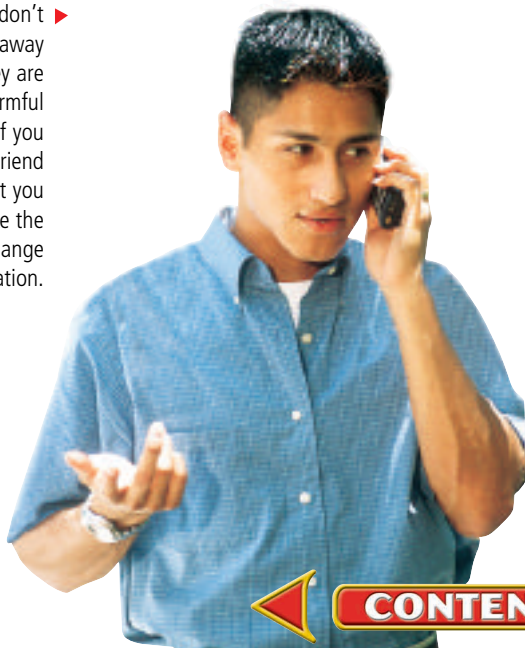
Enmeshment A fixer usually has enmeshment.

Enmeshment is a condition in which a person becomes obsessed with the needs of another person and no longer can recognize his or her own needs.

The fixer A person who tries to fix other people's problems is the **fixer**. The fixer takes on problems that are not his or her responsibility, but are the responsibility of another person. The fixer is quick to give advice. He or she will identify different possible solutions to the other person's problems and try them for the person. In the process of getting involved with someone else's problems, the fixer avoids his or her own feelings and problems. The fixer sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships because healthy people do not want others to solve their problems. Healthy people solve their own problems with the support of others. They do not want others to take over a situation.

The distancer A person who is emotionally unavailable to others is the **distancer**. The distancer may have been hurt by someone in the past and, therefore, keeps other people from getting too close. The distancer may be too busy to spend time with other people, or may avoid sharing feelings. The distancer keeps others at a distance so he or she will not get

Often, teens don't realize right away that they are involved in a harmful relationship. If you feel that a friend does not treat you well, make the decision to change the situation. ▶



hurt. The distancer sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships by not risking emotional involvement.

The controller A person who is possessive, jealous, and domineering is the **controller**. The controller seeks power. The controller may tell another person what to do, what to wear, and what to believe. The controller does not like to share the object of his or her attention with anyone else. The controller may monopolize a boyfriend's or girlfriend's time. The controller sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships by not respecting the interests or opinions of others.

Healthy people want to participate in the decisions made within a relationship. A person may be fearful of a controller, and with good reason. Those with the need to control may become violent. You may have seen media coverage of teens who harmed their boyfriend or girlfriend. In many instances, the teen causing the harm was a controller. There may have been signs of jealousy and possessive behavior before the harmful incident occurred, but they were not recognized or dealt with. Trust your feelings if you feel someone is being too jealous or possessive of you. Talk to a trusted adult.

The center A person who is self-centered is the **center**. It is as if the center is wearing a badge that says, "me, me, me." Talk to the center on the telephone and the center will do most of the talking. But the center will not show much interest in what you have to say. The center wants to do what the center wants to do, when the center wants to do it, and he or she is not too concerned about what other

people want to do or how other people feel. The center sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships by being so focused on being the center of attention that the needs of others are ignored. Others do not want to spend time with a person who can focus only on his or her own interests.

The abuser A person who is abusive is the **abuser**. The abuser may constantly put down others or cause others personal harm. The abuser may threaten others, begin fights, and act in violent ways. The abuser may force someone to have sex. Other people may find the abuser's behavior confusing. This is because the abuser may follow acts of abuse with periods of gentleness. However, the abusive behavior usually returns. An abuser may miss the chance to have healthful relationships by threatening and harming others.

Stay away from a person you suspect may be an abuser. This person can cause you physical or emotional harm. If someone is abusing you, either verbally or physically, immediately tell an adult you trust. It is never okay for someone to harm you. If the adult you go to for help does not help you end your relationship with an abuser, go to someone else who will.

The liar A person who does not tell the truth is the **liar**. Honesty is a foundation in any healthful relationship. People base their responses on what you tell them in your conversations and actions. When a liar does not tell the truth, other people make responses based on false information. Other people say and do things they might not have said or done had they



known the truth. This is exactly what the liar wants. The liar may lie about himself or herself to try to look good. For example, the liar may pretend to be something he or she is not, in order to impress others. His or her relationships are based on lies. The liar may have many friendships and relationships that are very shallow. These relationships lack a real connection or commitment because of the liar's actions. The liar avoids the truth to manipulate others into the responses he or she wants. The liar sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships by lying to others to get the response he or she wants.

The promise breaker A person who is not reliable is the **promise breaker**. The promise breaker will make plans with another person and be a "no show." The promise breaker often makes plans with another person and changes them if something better comes along. The promise breaker may agree to change annoying behaviors but does not make the changes. The promise breaker sabotages the chance to have healthful relationships by not keeping his or her word. Other people doubt the promise breaker's sincerity and commitment, which usually leads to ending the relationship.

▲ People doubt a promise breaker's sincerity and commitment, which usually leads to the end of a relationship.

Make the Connection

Media Television programs often have characters with some of these different profiles. For more information on ways to analyze messages in media, see page 558 in Lesson 52.



Involvement in Harmful Relationships

It takes two people to have a relationship. What draws two people together? Is it by circumstance, such as being members of the same family? Being on the same athletic team at school? Having a part-time job at the same place? Or is it by choice? Two people are involved in a relationship because they are drawn to one another. It is important to understand the reasons why. Two people might be involved in a harmful relationship together because: 1) each one of them allows the other to play out a specific profile of harmful behavior, or 2) other people who expect healthful behavior avoid relationships with them.

Did You Know?

Responsibility An abuser often tries to blame the person he or she mistreats. The abuser might say, "You made me do it." Never accept responsibility for being abused by someone.

Why People Get Involved in Harmful Relationships

Match-up: a promise breaker and a people pleaser A promise breaker makes plans to go to a movie with a people pleaser. When the promise breaker gets another more interesting invitation, he or she cancels the plans. The people pleaser is angry but keeps the anger inside. The people pleaser accommodates the promise breaker and agrees to go to the movie at a later date.

Suppose you are a friend of the promise breaker. He or she mentions that he or she cancelled plans with someone to do something more interesting. Would you approve of what the promise breaker did? You do not know the other person in that relationship is a people pleaser, so you do not recognize that he or she also is relating in a harmful way. But if you knew the interaction of the two people in the relationship, you would have known that both people relate in harmful ways. The promise

breaker needs to learn to keep commitments. The people pleaser must set limits and share his or her feelings of anger and frustration.

Match-up: a controller and an enabler While controllers and enablers can be either male or female, in this match-up the controller is female and the enabler is male. The controller is a jealous teen female who demands all of her boyfriend's attention. She objects when he spends time with his friends. She has angry outbursts if a female classmate speaks to him.

The controller is very suspicious and accuses her boyfriend of seeing other girls. He is an enabler and makes excuses for her. He convinces himself "She loves me so much that she wants me with her all the time." He gives up his friends to spend all his time with her. He supports her wrong behavior. Suppose the male is your friend and he tells you about

his girlfriend's love for him. From what he says, you might think he is in a very loving relationship. You might not recognize that this is a harmful relationship and that both of them relate in harmful ways. The girlfriend must respect her boyfriend's right to have friends and encourage him to run his own life. The boyfriend must take responsibility for his life and not deny his own feelings and needs.

Match-up: a clinger and a distancer

Although clingers and distancers can be either male or female, in this match-up the clinger is female and the distancer is male. The clinger is a female who was raised in a divorced family. Her father abandoned the family when she was ten years old, and she rarely speaks with him. She was very hurt and feels the loss of her father's presence in the home. Deep down, she fears that she will be abandoned again. As a result, she is afraid to be vulnerable and close. She becomes attracted to a distancer. The distancer is the perfect match because he is emotionally unavailable.

Both the clinger and the distancer are afraid to be close but they protect themselves in different ways. The clinger chases someone who cannot

be close. The distancer runs away from relationships and does not get emotionally involved with the clinger. Both the clinger and the distancer must change to have healthful relationships. The clinger must address the emptiness she feels and develop greater self-confidence. The distancer must address his fears of sharing feelings and becoming close to others.

Changing one's profile to fit different relationships

There are many match-ups of people who relate in harmful ways, such as the center and the fixer, and a people pleaser and an abuser. It is important to know that a person can be described one way in one relationship and a different way in another relationship. For example, suppose a female has several close friends, but is an enabler only when she is with her boyfriend. She needs to examine this relationship to determine what causes her to relate in harmful ways.

Almost everyone has one or more qualities of the profiles described in this lesson. You may not fit a profile 100 percent, but do you recognize any of the harmful behaviors in your own actions? Use the steps on the following page to improve your relationships with others.

Make the Connection

Self-Confidence For more information on how to be more self-confident and assertive in your relationships with others, see page 48 in Lesson 5.

Mini-Review

1. How does an enabler harm healthful relationships?
2. Why will certain people with harmful behaviors be drawn to one another?

How Harmful Relationships Affect Health Status

Mental-emotional health

- anxiety and stress
- feelings of guilt and/or rejection
- lack of self-confidence
- negative self-esteem

Physical health

- headaches
- stomachaches
- sleeplessness
- injuries from abuse

Family-social health

- lack of nurturing, supportive connections
- failure to develop appropriate social skills

Changing Harmful Relationships

Suppose you recognize that you are involved in a harmful relationship that threatens your health status and that of the other person in the relationship. You can take steps to end or change the relationship. Your parents, guardian, and other responsible adults can help you.

1. Evaluate each of your relationships on a regular basis.
 - List ways you relate to others that worry you.
 - List ways other people relate to you that worry you.
 - Ask a parent, guardian, or other trusted adult to review the lists with you. This adult may recognize harmful behaviors in one of your relationships that you do not recognize.
2. Recognize when you must end a harmful relationship rather than work to change it.
 - End a relationship with anyone who chooses illegal behavior or threatens your health or safety.
 - End a relationship when your parents or guardian ask you to do so.
 - Get help from a trusted adult if the harmful relationship is with a family member.
3. Identify changes in behavior that must occur in any existing harmful relationship if you are to continue with the relationship.
 - List changes you expect from yourself. For example, you might write, "I will not cancel plans if something better comes along."
 - List changes you expect the other person to make. For example, you might write, "I expect (person's name) to tell the truth at all times."
4. Talk to a parent, guardian, or other trusted adult about the changes you expect in the relationship.
 - Share your concerns about the relationship.
 - Share the behaviors you expect to change.
 - Share the behaviors you expect the other person to change.
 - Discuss whether your expectations are realistic.
 - Discuss whether or not it is wise to continue the relationship.
5. Have a frank discussion with the other person in the relationship in which you share your concerns and expectations.
 - Identify your concerns and your expectations.
 - Ask the other person to identify his or her concerns and expectations.
 - Discuss whether or not the relationship should be continued.
 - Make a plan to work on the relationship if you want to continue together.
6. Set a future date when you will evaluate the relationship again.
 - Evaluate whether or not your expectations have been fulfilled.

RELATIONSHIPS in the Media

Discussion Think of a character in one of your favorite books or movies who fits one of the ten profiles for harmful behavior described in this lesson. How does his or her behavior fit the profile? How could he or she change in order to become more healthful in relationships? What are some of the reasons he or she relates in harmful ways? After you have considered these questions, break into small groups and discuss each person's character.

17 STUDY GUIDE

abuser
center
clinger
controller
distancer
enabler
fixer
harmful relationship
healthful relationship
liar
people pleaser
promise breaker



Key Terms Review

Match the mini-profiles below with the lesson Key Terms on the left. Do not write in this book.

1. a person who supports the harmful behavior of others
2. a person who is needy, dependent, and suffocates others
3. a person who ignores the needs of others and is self-centered
4. a person who is emotionally unavailable and pushes others away
5. a person who puts down, threatens, and harms others
6. a person who constantly seeks approval, is a "doormat," and will do almost anything to be liked
7. a person who is possessive, jealous, and domineering
8. a person who does not tell the truth
9. a person who takes over other people's responsibilities and often gives advice
10. a person who is unreliable and agrees to change behavior but does not do so

Recalling the Facts

11. What are two reasons people might get involved in harmful relationships?
12. What are four negative effects of harmful relationships on mental-emotional health?
13. What are four negative effects of harmful relationships on physical health?
14. What are six steps you might take to end or change a relationship?
15. What are three ways to evaluate your relationships on a regular basis?
16. What are three circumstances in which you should end a relationship?
17. How does an enabler sabotage healthful relationships?
18. How might your parents or guardian help if you need to change a relationship?

Critical Thinking

19. Why might a person act one way in one relationship and differently in another?
20. How can a person's role in his or her family affect his or her behavior with friends? Give an example.
21. How does a people pleaser differ from a clinger?
22. Once a harmful relationship becomes a healthful one, what positive effects will it have on your physical and emotional health?

Activities

Responsible Decision Making

27. **Role-Play** You invite a friend to a movie. She says she can't go because her new boyfriend gets jealous if she spends time with anyone else. What would you do in this situation? Role-play the situation with a classmate. Refer to the Responsible Decision-Making Model on page 61 for help.

Real-Life Applications

23. Has a harmful relationship hurt your health? How?
24. How can you improve your behavior to have more healthful relationships?
25. Why do you think a center talks about himself or herself all the time?
26. Which profiled personality do you think is most dangerous to be involved with? Why?

Sharpen Your Life Skills

28. **Analyze Influences on Health** In a small group, select three television programs. Write descriptions of the shows and profiles of at least two of the characters. One of the characters in each program must fit one of the ten profiles of people who relate in harmful ways.