



The
Relationship
Foundation

Building Social and Emotional Learning



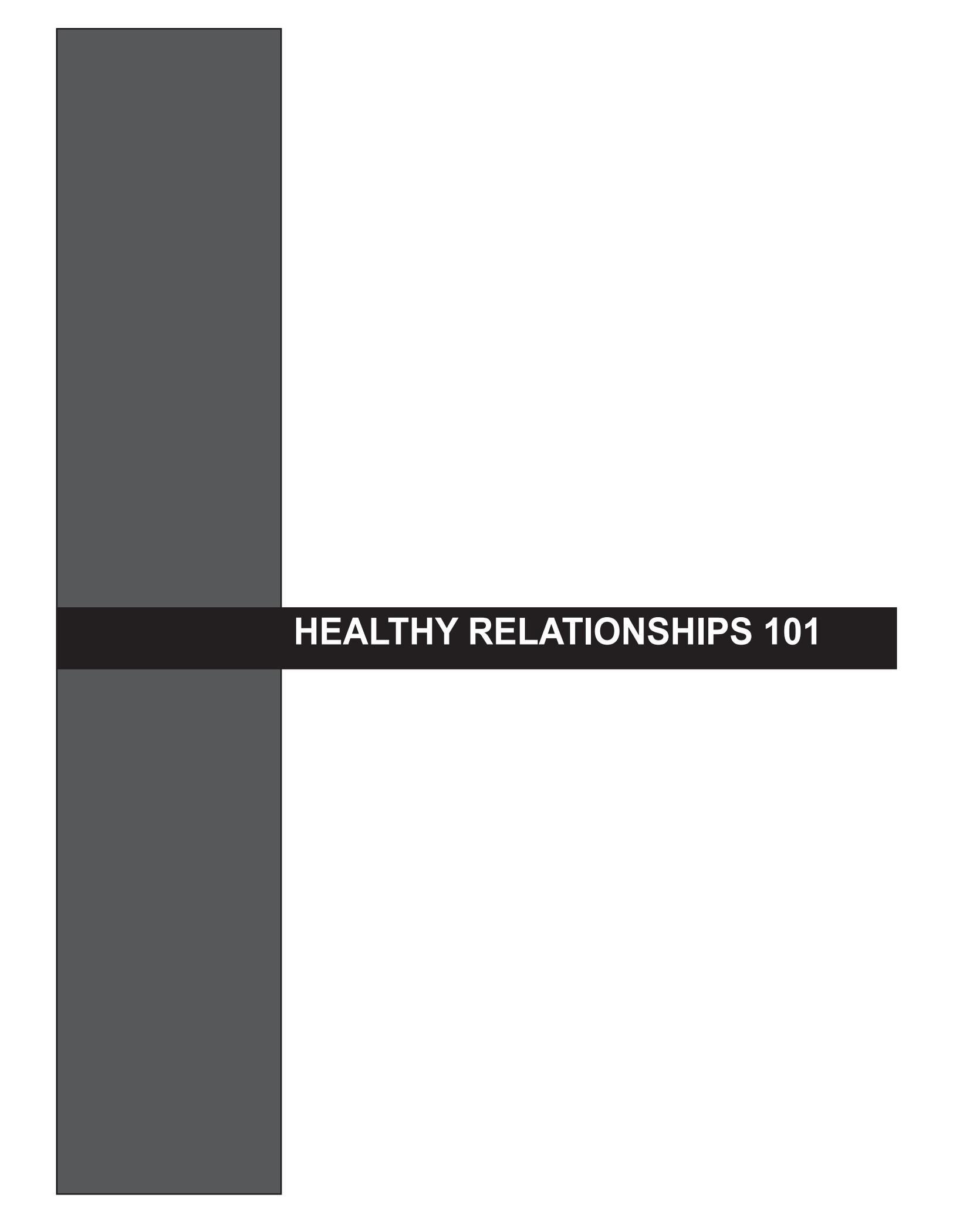
Healthy Relationships 101

An Essential Component of the Learning Process



Guidebook for Teachers





HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS 101

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION		2
EXPLANATION OF MATERIALS AND LECTURES		3
UNDERSTANDING ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES		4
SESSION 1	RELATIONSHIPS - THE JOURNEY BEGINS Introducing relationships as a subject of study and exploration	6
SESSION 2	EMPATHY How to become empowered by listening empathically	10
SESSION 3	NEEDS IN RELATIONSHIPS Introducing a communication skill set for the modern era Nonviolent Communication (NVC)	14
SESSION 4	OBSERVATIONS, NEEDS, FEELINGS, AND REQUESTS How to express needs and feelings without blame or judgment	18
SESSION 5	THE APPLICATION OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION (NVC) An alternative to habitual behavior	24
SESSION 6	BULLYING: THE STAKES ARE HIGH Preventing and understanding bullying	29
SESSION 7	SELF ESTEEM AND BODY IMAGE How self esteem influences relationships	31
SESSION 8	ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS Identifying and avoiding them	34
SESSION 9	BOUNDARIES Their role in personal development	37
SESSION 10	TEXTING AND OTHER COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES "Tech neglect" and the impact of social media	38
SESSION 11	HAPPY VERSUS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS Defining the difference between a happy relationship and a healthy relationship	40
SESSION 12	CONCLUSION AND REVIEW	42

Empathy

Objectives:

1. Define empathy and sympathy, and understand their differences.
2. Understand how to effectively express empathy.
3. Differentiate between empathy blocking and empathic listening.

Materials:

Handout #1 - Empathy: The Art of Listening

Handout #2 - Half Feelings List

Handout #3 (Homework) - Empathy Essay

Video (Optional) - Sean Stephenson's "A Dance Party": <https://youtu.be/TAibh3SqRUo>
Show "A Dance Party" video again to explore new insights that may have arisen from the empathy session.

Do Now: Journal Feedback Discussion - Students discuss their journal entries with each other. **Journal Discussions can start or finish any session depending on time available. Many additional topics will arise from students' entries.**

***Note to Teacher:** Teacher shares about how much they appreciated the content of the questions the students came up with. Additionally share how one of the goals of the class is to be able to have more awareness about relationship issues as the course continues.

Check In: "Does anybody have anything they want to share about Session One? Who understands relationships a little better since doing the Three Main Relationships Questions exercise?"

Class Discussion / Lecture: Sympathy and Empathy

Ask students to write how they define sympathy and empathy. **Call on class to share their answers.** Then read the Oxford Dictionary definitions to them:

Sympathy – Expressions of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.

"Definition of Sympathy in English:." Sympathy: Definition of Sympathy in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US). 2015.

Empathy – The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

"Definition of Empathy in English:." Empathy: Definition of Empathy in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US). 2015.

"Sympathy is most useful when something quite disturbing or tragic has occurred, but on a daily basis, it is empathy, more than sympathy, that builds meaningful relationships.

Regarding the dictionary definition of empathy, how could one understand and/or share the feelings of another without first hearing what feelings are occurring? When it comes to understanding the feelings of another, we can really only guess what they might be. There are some common misconceptions about what expressing empathy looks like. When someone shares a difficult situation, we often have a strong urge to give advice or reassurance and/or to explain our own position or feeling.

Empathy, however, is something quite different. Empathy requires us to quiet our thoughts and

listen attentively. It is the art of listening. Empathy is about presence and making the other person the center of attention. Empathy is about being interested rather than interesting. Empathy with another can only be achieved when preconceived notions and judgments about what they are saying have been put aside.

Before we explore empathic listening, let's discuss what impedes it. On the following page are examples of typical responses that are often used when responding to someone sharing something annoying or upsetting. These are called **Empathy Blockers.**"

In Class Exercise: (Handout #1) Empathy - The Art of Listening

Practicing Empathy Blocking

Teacher reads the situation described at the top of the Empathy: The Art of Listening handout.

Example: Someone says, "I'm so upset because I was late for school."

Students get into pairs. One is A and one is B; A will go first. Student A thinks of a situation that bothered or frustrated her/him and shares it once with Student B. In response to Student A, Student B replies with each of the empathy blockers, one after the other. Then they switch roles.

Class Discussion:

After the exercise, students discuss:

What happened, what did you feel, when you experienced empathy blocking?

If not discussed, mention to class the examples below. How does empathy blocking:

1. Create distance?
2. Take attention away from the person speaking?
3. Frustrate or irritate people?

In Class Exercise: Practicing Empathic Listening

Students go back with their partners and again, take turns saying each of the empathic responses to the others' concerns. Again, one person is A and one is B; A will go first. Student A repeats the same situation that bothered or frustrated her/him and shares it once with Student B. This time, in response to Student A, Student B replies with each of the empathic responses, one after the other. Then they switch roles.

Empathic responses:

"I hear you." Said with sincerity, meets a person's need to be heard.

"Wow." or "Yikes." Said softly, gives the speaker a sense you are present.

"Tell me more. / Is there more to that?" Saying this shows you are really interested.

"I don't know what to say right now, but I'm just so grateful you told me."

When someone shares a particularly difficult situation, this may be all you have to say.

Class Discussion:

After the exercise, students discuss:

If not discussed, again mention to class the examples below. How does empathic listening:

1. Create connection?
2. Put attention on the person speaking?
3. Support connection with another?

Lecture: Empathic Responses

"Empathic responses allow for a whole new dimension of listening and connecting with another. A basic human desire is to be received. What does it mean to be received? It is the desire to be heard and seen without judgment. How simple is the phrase, *'I hear you,'* yet how powerful is its significance in creating connection?" If you want to be a good friend, be a good listener.

Key Points:

"Empathy allows you to connect with another person, which is an essential component in developing and maintaining healthy relationships. Empathic listening opens up a broad space for two people to connect. Supporting someone in being the center of attention allows them to be more at ease in expressing themselves.

An element of empathy is to listen without the urge to immediately respond. Empathic listening requires us to be present in the moment. It has the potential to counteract conditioned behavior, thus enhancing any relationship."

Writing Exercise and Class Discussion: Review

Students write one or more paragraphs about how they experienced empathy blocking and empathic listening. The teacher then asks them to share their insights. Teacher collects their papers to review. Reviewing this exercise can give the teacher further insights into the awareness that students are developing.

Lecture: Empathy Guesses / Feelings Guesses

"Often, we tell people what we think they are feeling, hoping in the process that we can somehow connect with them. For instance, let's say you are going to an event that holds great importance to you. You are traveling in a friend's car. Your friend gets stopped for having an expired registration, and you are late for the event. When you arrive, you encounter others who expected you to be there earlier, and some of them are disappointed.

Later, you recount this story to a friend and your friend says, 'You **must** have been really aggravated about that.' Is it true you were aggravated? Maybe you had a different feeling! Maybe you felt frustrated; maybe you felt embarrassed; maybe you felt disappointed. How can anyone know for sure what another person is feeling? We generally can't. One way to know is to simply ask, 'What are you feeling?' Or, 'What were you feeling?' It sounds easy but it takes practice to get used to."

Another way to find out is by empathy guessing. Again, instead of telling someone what you think they are feeling, you can ask any of the following:

"I am wondering if you are/were feeling..."

"Is it that you are/were feeling...?"

"I am guessing you might be feeling..."

"I imagine that you might be feeling..."

With empathy guessing, you are inquiring; you are checking in; you'd like to know what is going on with another person. It's different than telling them what they're feeling.

Empathic listening and empathy guessing can add whole new elements of connection to any relationship!"

Pair Exercise: (Handout #2) Half Feelings List

Students get into "A" and "B" pairs again. Ask the class to think of another situation that annoyed or disappointed them. Student A shares their example. Student B uses the Intro Feelings List to guess what student A might be feeling. Student A replies with a yes or no to the guesses. Then they switch roles. This is a simple practice, but when repeated regularly, it will naturally become part of the way students think and speak. Empathy guessing is another vital relationship skill.

Optional Lecture:

"Empathic listening can also be used to bring resolution to a trying situation. In a situation where there is a difference of opinion, ask if you can repeat back what you think you heard as best you can, followed by 'Did I get that right?' This lets the other person know that you are actively listening." It meets an essential need to be heard.

Homework: (Handout #3) "Empathy Essay"

This assignment can also be done in class. It's up to the teacher's discretion.

Reminder: Students should hand in their journals for grading.

Empathy: The Art of Listening

Listed below are what we call “Empathy Blockers” followed by examples of how you can show empathy.

For example, a friend says, “I’m so upset because I was late for school.” Some typical responses listed below are often said with the best of intentions but can unknowingly create distance and disconnection.

- **One-upping**

“I was late myself the other day. I had a long wait for the bus.”

- **Advising / Fixing**

“Maybe you should get up earlier.”

“Maybe you should think about getting a better alarm.”

“Maybe you should ...”

- **Educating**

“You know there is more than one bus line you can take.”

- **Analyzing**

“It seems like you’re always late for first period.”

- **Consoling**

“Well, what can you do! You tried your best.”

- **Discounting**

“You should be glad this school is so close to your home.”

Some things we can say to express empathy

- **“I hear you.”** Said with sincerity, meets a person’s need to be heard.
- **“Wow.”** or **“Yikes.”** Said softly, gives the speaker a sense you are listening and are connected with them.
- **“Tell me more.”** Said with sincerity, shows you are really interested.
- **“I don’t know what to say right now, but I’m grateful you told me.”**
When someone is experiencing a particularly difficult situation, this may be all you have to say.

Half Feelings List

Fulfilled Feelings

CARING

Loving
Open

HOPEFUL

Comfortable
Optimistic
Renewed

ENGAGED

Absorbed
Curious
Engrossed
Fascinated
Interested
Intrigued

GRATEFUL

Moved
Thankful
Touched

INSPIRED

Amazed
Enthusiastic

JOYFUL

Amused
Delighted
Glad
Happy
Pleased
Overjoyed

PEACEFUL

Calm
Comfortable
Centered
Quiet
Relaxed
Relieved
Satisfied

Unfulfilled Feelings

AFRAID

Frightened
Mistrustful
Worried

ANNOYED

Aggravated
Bothered
Frustrated
Irritated

ANGER

Angry
Enraged
Furious
Resentful

CONFUSED

Conflicted
Lost
Puzzled
Torn

ANXIETY

Agitated
Anxious
Concerned
Disturbed
Restless
Surprised
Unsettled
Upset

EMBARRASSED

Ashamed
Self-conscious

FATIGUE

Beat
Depleted
Exhausted
Tired
Worn out

PAIN

Grief
Hurting
Lonely
Miserable

SAD

Depressed
Disappointed
Discouraged
Hopeless
Miserable
Unhappy

DISCONNECTED

Bored
Detached
Distant
Numb
Removed
Withdrawn

TENSE

Anxious
Distressed
Nervous
Overwhelmed
Stressed out

VULNERABLE

Fragile
Insecure

AVERSION

Disgusted
Hatred
Hostile
Repulsed



Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Name of School _____

Empathy Essay

Think of a personal situation where Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and empathy would have been helpful. Explain, in at least two paragraphs, how using NVC and empathy might have produced a different outcome. It can be an interaction with a friend, family member, significant other, or one of your school mates. You can write about a situation where you would have liked to use NVC and empathic listening or where you would have liked someone else to use them.