

Messaging Session Plan

Learning Intentions:

- To recognise abuse within early intimate relationships
- To understand how modern technology contributes to control and abuse in relationships
- To recognise the role of bystanders and ways in which bystanders can intervene

Key Learning Outcomes:

HWB 1/2/3/4-02a

I know that we all experience a variety of thoughts and emotions that affect how we feel and behave and I am learning ways of managing them.

HWB 1/2/3/4-16a

I am learning to assess and manage risk, to protect myself and others, and to reduce the potential for harm when possible.

HWB 2-49a

I know that all forms of abuse are wrong and I am developing the skills to keep myself safe and get help if I need it.

HWB 3/4-45a

I recognise that power can exist within relationships and can be used positively as well as negatively.

UNCRC - Children's Rights:

Article 15 states that children have the right to freely join things and meet people so long as they don't endanger or threaten others.

Article 16 states that children have the right to privacy.

Article 29 states that children have the right to an education which encourages them to respect other people's rights and values.

GIRFEC Wellbeing Indicators:

Safe, Healthy, Respected, Responsible, Included

RSHP: Third/Fourth level

<https://rshp.scot/third-fourth-level/#abuseandrelationships>

Success Criteria:

- I can identify when abuse may be happening in relationships
- I can discuss the potential ways in which abusers can use technology to control their partner
- I can name some options I may take if I witness abuse within relationships

Preparation:

- Prepare 5 min icebreaker activity (you can develop your own, or see session plan below for an example)
- Locate PowerPoint slides or printed handouts of 'Messaging' scenario from your MVP staff supporter
- Agree/Disagree/Unsure signs (if using)
- Current relevant statistics from <http://www.nspcc.org.uk>

Resources:

- Projector & PowerPoint (if being used)
- Flipchart/whiteboard
- Marker pens
- Your Group Agreement from Core Session 1 (pin/tack this up in the room)
- Gender box flipcharts from Core Session 1 (pin/tack this up in the room)
- Meanings worksheets (1 per 2/3 pupils) if using the example icebreaker below (download available on MVP website)

Other Useful resources:

[A summary of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood \(RSHP\) resources | Resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

https://wakelet.com/wake/tfympoFlsH2kbt8IXr_iD

<https://wakelet.com/wake/mKf6r6Uke396dhETaSzhP>

https://wakelet.com/wake/F1zN5ODJ_KzNGJyzxj2V-

Introduction (2 minutes)

Welcome the group and inform them that **this session will explore control and abuse within early intimate relationships and how the use of modern technology can support this.**

Refer to group agreement and ask if pupils would like to add/change anything.

Remind the group that the issues raised in the lesson can be difficult and there might be people in the class with personal experiences. The group agreement is there so that everyone feels safe, included and supported.

If anyone needs support during the lesson they can ask a mentor or speak to the teacher who is nearby.

At the end of the lesson, mentors will put up a list of places in and out of school that can offer support if anyone needs it. They can also get these at any time from mentors or staff.

Share the Learning Intentions, Success Criteria and Children's Rights for this session (Slides 2 and 3).

Icebreaker Activity (5 minutes)

Example Icebreaker: MEANINGS

Divide the group into pairs or groups of 3 and give each group a print-out of the sheet 'Meanings'.

Explain that they have 5 minutes to write what they think the meanings are for the abbreviations given and to also draw an emoji for each of these.

As a larger group, feedback the answers and compare emoji's drawn. Ask the group if this is the sort of language they would use when messaging their friends. Then ask if they would use this in their schoolwork.

Explain that people use different language when talking with different people and also the way they are communicating influences what they are saying. Ask them to keep this in mind when thinking about today's session which focuses on messaging.

Scenario (5 minutes)

Remind the class that for this session they will be bystanders to an incident involving a friend, classmate or someone they know.

Show slide 5 and ask for a volunteer to read the scenario (if after asking twice no-one volunteers, read it yourself).

Your friend is constantly sending his girlfriend messages; asking her where she is, who she's with and what she's doing. This isn't just friendly chat. You get the feeling that he's obsessed and jealous and always needs to know her every move.

Ask the group:

1. Is this realistic; is it the kind of thing that could happen?

2. Put your hand up if you feel there is something wrong with what is happening in this scenario...

If most of the group raise their hand, before they are lowered ask them to look around the room and see how their friends/classmates have responded. If most don't put their hand up at this point – return to this question after the discussion part of the session.

3. What are the red flags? What are the key words or phrases in this which make you think something is wrong?

Ask pupils to discuss this for 30 seconds with the person beside them, then ask class to call them out – note the red flags down on flipchart/whiteboard as they are called out.

Train of Thought (5 minutes)

Ask the group:

1. As a bystander in this situation what questions might you have? What might you be thinking?

This can be briefly discussed in pairs or groups and then shared or called out individually.

Ask for a volunteer to read the following train of thought (if after asking twice no one volunteers, then read it yourself)

Why is he messaging her so much? Then again, a lot of people send loads of messages. Is this normal? Is she happy with it? Even so, it doesn't seem right. Is he trying to control her? I know some girls think that boys who are jealous must really love them. But is this behaviour abusive? I'm not sure it's any of my business. After all, I wouldn't want other people messing in my relationships. What should I do?

Ask the group:

What reasons might someone give for not getting involved in this situation?

Suggestions may include: it's up to them what/how often they message, think it's nothing to do with me, maybe that's what their relationship is like, don't want to get involved in someone else's relationship etc.

Agree Disagree Unsure (10 minutes)

AGREE/DISAGREE/UNSURE

Place your agree and disagree signs at opposite sides of the room (if using).

Tell the group you are going to show them a statement and they should decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement, moving to the relevant side of the room. If they are unsure, they can stand in the middle.

Statement 1

Receiving lots of messages from your boyfriend/girlfriend means they really care

Give a short amount of time for group to make their choice then ask 2-3 people in each group: **Why did you agree/disagree/Why are you unsure?**

Note: try not to let discussion get too in-depth, as this will happen in the 'Discussion' section of the lesson

Ask the group:

1. When would lots of messages be too many?

Take some ideas from the group

2. Does the content of the messages matter in what might be considered too many?

Prompt if required: ***What sort of content might be more uncomfortable for someone?***

You want the group to recognise that continual two way conversation and general chat over messages might be considered 'normal' for some, but if someone is receiving constant messages asking where they are, who they are with etc, this might be uncomfortable for that person and would therefore be considered excessive. When one party feels pressured or uncomfortable about the level of messaging it would be considered too many or excessive.

3. Do you think one or two messages, depending on content, could be enough to make someone feel uncomfortable?

Reinforce to the group that excessive messaging could be a sign of an unhealthy and potentially abusive relationship. It might make a person feel uncomfortable or under pressure. In some circumstances fewer messages might have the same impact depending on their content.

Statement 2

Monitoring your boyfriend's/girlfriend's location is OK

Give a short amount of time for group to make their choice then ask 2-3 people in each group:
Why did you agree/disagree/Why are you unsure?

Note: try not to let discussion get too in-depth, as this will happen in the 'Discussion' section of the lesson

Ask the group:

1. When could it be a good idea to monitor someone's location?

Take some answers from the group; walking home alone, safety reasons, at their request

2. What might be the dangers of your boyfriend/girlfriend monitoring your location?

Isolation from friends/family, invasion of privacy, trying to control behaviour, manipulation, thinking this behaviour is normal.

3. How might the tracked person feel?

Trapped, under control, oppressed, scared, anxious

Remind the group that although this scenario uses the example of a boy sending a girl messages, girls can also message boys in this way, as well as those who don't identify as a particular gender. It may happen just as frequently within same sex relationships too.

Discussion (10 minutes)

Ask the group:

1. Why might the boy send messages asking where his girlfriend is and who she is with?

Responses may include: Maybe he feels insecure, maybe he thinks she's cheating, maybe he's worried about her, maybe he is thinking about meeting her.

2. Think about the Gender Box exercise we did in the first MVP session. Why might some boys think it's OK to treat their girlfriends like this?

Responses may include: Boys are conditioned by society/home/the media to think they should be in control of their relationships. Boys don't want to lose face in front of their friends who might think their girlfriend is not respecting him or their relationship by spending time with other boys etc.

3. Why might some girls think it is ok for their boyfriend to send constant messages?

Suggest: Girls are subject to the same media stereotypes and influences as boys and some might believe that they should be submissive to their boyfriend to keep him happy; some girls might think he's only sending so many messages because he is worried about her or really loves her

4. If a girl had cheated on her boyfriend in the past, or often spent time in the company of other boys, would that make it ok?

Take some ideas from the group and reiterate that this isn't an excuse for controlling behaviour and that control is a form of abuse. Abuse is never ok.

5. How might the girl feel when a stream of messages comes through?

Suggestions might include: She might feel frustrated, anxious or afraid, might wonder why he is asking her so many questions, perhaps worry he will be annoyed if she doesn't answer the way he wants her to, might feel like she should go home or be with him to keep him happy etc.

6. Do you think what's happening here could be a form of abuse?

Take some ideas then let the group know that control is a form of abuse as it is about power, and making someone feel they should do what you want them to do.

7. It asks in the train of thought 'Is he trying to control her?' What sort of things might someone in a relationship try to control?

Responses may include: What their partner does, who they spend time with, what they wear, where they go etc.

8. With this in mind, is constant messaging asking these kinds of questions a form of control? Yes

9. It also says in the train of thought ‘This can’t be healthy’. Would asking these sorts of questions be part of a healthy relationship?

Asking the questions as part of a normal conversation is not necessarily unhealthy but asking constantly is a sign of control and abuse, and therefore unhealthy.

If at the beginning, most of the class didn’t see any problem with the scenario, this would be a good point to revisit it. Again, show the scenario and ask the class, ‘Given what we’ve now discussed, can you raise your hand if you think there’s something wrong with what is going on here.’

Responsibility (1 minute)

Refer to scenario, and **ask the group:**

1. Do we have a responsibility to do something here?

2. Who do we have a responsibility to?

You may need to prompt group – the girl, your friend

3. Do we have a responsibility to our friend? Why?

He might not recognise what he is doing is unhealthy and controlling. If he continues to behave this way his girlfriend might finish with him and then he’d be hurt.

4. Do we have a responsibility to his girlfriend? Why?

No one should feel they need to answer to their partner about what they are doing or who they are with on a constant basis. She shouldn’t feel pressured or controlled. It’s not healthy; it’s abusive. If she continues to accept this, it could lead to other forms of abuse.

5. Do we have a responsibility to ourselves?

We have a responsibility to keep ourselves safe, and to be able to say if we don’t agree with something.

Explain to the group we are now going to explore some of the things we could do in this situation.

Options (10 minutes)

If you have time you might ask the group to consider the pros and cons of these options in small groups first, before you discuss as a larger group. If not, this can be done as a whole-class activity.

When discussing options, consider the following:

Option 1: Do nothing. It's none of your business.

Ask the group:

1. Is this an option that some might consider using?

We have already identified some of the reasons people might give for not getting involved.

2. What might happen if you do nothing?

Responses may include: The abuse could escalate or manifest in other abusive behaviours; She might feel anxious and scared to live her life her own way; She may become isolated from friends etc.

3. What does doing nothing say to your friend?

That you don't think there's anything wrong with what he's doing. That you agree he has the 'right' to know his girlfriends every move.

4. What does doing nothing say to his girlfriend?

That this is okay and that you don't think there's a problem with it. That you don't support her.

Option 2: Encourage your friend to do something else apart from sending messages.

Ask the group:

1. Why might people choose this option?

It's easy and safe.

2. What could you say to your friend to take his mind off sending messages?

Take some ideas and allow the group to consider how this option might work for them in a real life scenario.

3. Do you think simply taking your friends mind off sending messages is enough?

Suggest to the group that the next option might help them consider this.

Option 3: Tell your friend that you're worried about what's going on, and that he needs to give his girlfriend some space.

Ask the group:

1. How difficult do you think this option would be? Why?

Some pupils might find this difficult as they wouldn't want to fall out with their friend or him to think they were sticking their nose in his relationship.

2. What do you think you could say to your friend that might make him listen?

If group have difficulty with this, you may need to prompt them:

2.1 Do you think he might understand if you asked him if his girlfriend always messages him asking those questions how would he feel about it?

2.2 Do you think he would listen if you told him you were worried his girlfriend might be annoyed if he's always messaging her and she might end the relationship?

You want the group to recognise that by framing the discussion in a way which shows you are concerned about your friend and his wellbeing/relationship, he might feel less judged and understand your concerns better.

Option 4: Talk to a friend of hers and see if they have any concerns or can offer her some support.

Ask the group:

1. What are the benefits of talking to her friends about this?

Take some ideas and suggest that her friends would be in a better position to check she's ok and offer her support.

2. What might be the disadvantage of this?

Take some ideas. Your friend, or his girlfriend, might feel you are gossiping about their relationship behind their backs.

Option 5: Ask your other friends if they have noticed this too, and discuss what to do together.

Ask the group:

1. Why might this be a good option?

Remind the group that as most/all have already agreed that they see something wrong in this situation (when they raised their hands earlier), chances are their friends would too. If you are able to constructively challenge your friend about his behaviour you could stop him getting into trouble. It's important he recognises that his behaviour is unhealthy and that his friends do not support it.

Option 6: Talk about your concerns with a teacher/adult you trust or an MVP mentor, and ask their advice on what to do.

Ask the group:

1. What are your thoughts on this?

2. What reasons might people give for not choosing this option?

Suggestions might include: Don't want to be a tell-tale / a 'grass' (remind pupils that helping out in this situation is about being a good friend), don't want to interfere and bring even more people into their relationship when you can just approach directly etc.

3. Would speaking to a Mentor be another way of telling someone what is happening and getting some support?

Option 7: Personal Option

Ask the group:

1. Is there anything else you could do?

Remember to explore the possible consequences for any additional options.

Thank the group for their answers and ideas

Accessing support (1 minute)

The last slide highlights places and organisations where learners can access support if they have been impacted by the lesson in any way or are worried about a friend.

Ensure that in-school supports are discussed, but make the mentees aware of where they can get support outside of school, so that they have a range of options.

You can add local supports to the slide alongside the national ones already included that you feel are relevant to your community/area. You can also discuss this with your MVP staff supporter in school.

Conclusion (1 minute)

Let the group know that as leaders, they have the opportunity to make sure their school and community are respectful and that they can role model respect by not condoning behaviour which can be harmful to others.

Ask the group:

What have you learned from today's session?

Reinforce key messages from discussion to include:

- ✓ Sending numerous messages to a boyfriend/girlfriend could be a sign of a controlling relationship.
- ✓ Controlling someone, including always expecting to know where someone is or who they are with, is not part of a healthy relationship.
- ✓ There are a number of options we can choose from to challenge behaviour we don't agree with.
- ✓ We have a responsibility to help our friends and keep ourselves safe.

Accessing support

Leave this slide up as the lesson finishes and the mentees leave.