

# HEALTHY CLASSROOMS

Break the Cycle

PRODUCED BY: BREAK THE CYCLE &  
THE LOVE IS ADVOCACY YOUTH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM  
WITH SUPPORT FROM



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Teachers have a unique opportunity to interact with students on a daily basis for the majority of each school year. With the correlation of school shootings and teen dating violence, it is important for teachers to be aware of some of the warning signs, and how physical and emotional violence can be misinterpreted and normalized in the school setting. Teachers can offer support, provide resources, and encourage healthy conversations by utilizing the following tools

## CLASSROOM RULES/GROUP AGREEMENTS

In order to create a space where students feel comfortable, teachers should foster an open and welcoming environment. Students should be involved in the process of developing classroom rules/group agreements, because this will help raise their accountability amongst each other and encourage participation in class activities. Start by asking these questions to facilitate a discussion on classroom rules/group agreements:

- What does respect mean to you?
- How do we know when someone is treating us with respect?
- How do we hold each other accountable when someone is not being respectful?
- What do you need to make this a safe space?

## CLASSROOM RULES/ GROUP AGREEMENTS EXAMPLE

1. Speak from the heart.
  - All students are able to speak their mind without feeling judged.
2. Right to pass
  - If a student doesn't feel comfortable participating in a discussion or activity they can decide to pass.
3. Use "I" Statements
  - Our opinions should be shared using "I" instead of "you" statements.
  - Ex: Instead of saying, "What you said is mean." You could say, "I feel your comment wasn't kind."
4. Accountability
  - What is going to be done if the group agreements are broken?

The group agreements may look different in every class and that is okay. The point is to co-create how the time and space will be utilized while students are learning together. Throughout the school year, you may witness many "red flags" in the classroom. However, the reaction you have toward these instances can either make students feel supported or isolated. Below are some examples of situations that may arise in our classroom and how teachers can offer their support.



## INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS

### Elementary

#### What if this happens?

A student hits another student, and everyone says, *"Oh they like you."*

#### Something you can say or do is:

*"You should not be hitting another student. If you like someone there are other ways to show your feelings other than hitting."*

Equating affection with physicality inherently normalizes violence. This can send a message to young people that unhealthy behaviors are acceptable. Encourage students to use their words to express feelings.

### Middle School

#### What if this happens?

Inappropriate comments are made about a student's body

#### Something you can say or do is:

*"That was an inappropriate comment you just made. Talking about someone's body is not okay and can make them very uncomfortable."*

The sexualization of bodies can start at a very young age. Addressing inappropriate comments early on is imperative to help counter harmful messages by encouraging respect and making the space safer for everyone.

### High School

#### What if this happens?

There are rumors about a student's sexual activity.

#### Something you can say or do is:

*"It's not your place to judge someone for their choices. Don't spread rumors."*

Shaming someone for their personal decisions can make them feel isolated. To encourage healthy relationships in the classroom, have a conversation about privacy and boundaries.

### College

#### What if this happens?

A student says, *"If she wasn't dressed like that and drunk she wouldn't have been sexually assaulted."*

#### Something you can say or do is:

*"No one deserves to be sexually assaulted - no matter what they're wearing or how much they've had to drink."*

Victim blaming makes survivors feel invalidated and can further traumatize them. Due to a fear of disbelief from others, the majority of survivors never tell anyone about their experiences or seek help. Encourage students to support survivors.



## HARASSMENT

### Elementary

#### What if this happens?

A student looks up inappropriate words online and shows them to other students.

#### Something you can say or do is:

*"The computers are for school work only. Let's have a talk about what you were looking up after class."*

A student could be looking up things online for many reasons including; their curiosity, seeking attention, or to elicit a response. It is important to get at the root cause of why the student is displaying such behaviors, and address it immediately.

### Middle School

#### What if this happens?

Students have a "challenge" where they go around the hallway and slap other student's on the buttocks without consent.

#### Something you can say or do is:

*"Did you ask before touching another student? You should always get consent before touching someone."*

Slapping someone on the butt without consent is sexual assault. It is important to address the implications of this type of behavior and not let it be deemed a joke. Use this opportunity to reinforce that students can set physical boundaries for their bodies.

### High School

#### What if this happens?

A student shares an explicit picture of their ex-partner on Instagram.

#### Something you can say or do is:

*"It is never okay to share somebody else's pictures without their consent. If you have access to it you should delete it. How would you feel if this was you?"*

Inform them it is never okay to send somebody's pictures without their explicit consent.

### College

#### What if this happens?

A student discloses that someone has repeatedly followed them back to their dorm.

#### Something you can say or do is:

*"Have you talked to campus police or security about this? I know a colleague at the student resource center that could help you develop a safety plan."*

Support the young person by connecting them to the school's resource center, campus law enforcement, and ensure that a referral was made.



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