

# Focus Group Moderator's Guide

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## Focus Groups

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### Welcome and Introductions

(10 minutes)

- A. Purpose:** The main purpose of our discussion is to get your thoughts and feedback on different ways we might talk about and provide information about healthy relationships.
- B. Disclosures:**
  - Observation
  - Audio taping
  - Measures for safeguarding privacy
- C. Ground rules:**
  - No right/wrong answers—all about your honest opinions
  - We want different points of view, can agree/disagree
  - Need to hear from everyone, one at a time please
- D. Introductions:** name, grade/age, example of one thing you really like to do with friends

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### Issue A: Knowledge and attitudes toward dating relationships

(40 minutes)

*The purpose of this section is to explore knowledge and attitudes about healthy and unhealthy relationships, including perceptions around prevalence of healthy and unhealthy relationships*

**Today we are going to talk about what you and other people your age think about dating, and healthy and unhealthy relationships. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers – I'm here to learn from you, so please be as honest as possible when you are telling me what you think.**

- 1) What terms do you use to describe situations where people your age are in "dating" or "romantic" relationships?
- 2) Does that include people who are hooking up as well as people who are "going out"?
- 3) What words do you use to describe relationships [insert term they use] where one or both people treat each other poorly or in harmful way—emotionally/verbally, physically, socially?
- 4) How much of that do you see among your group of "friends"? Do you notice or hear about it going on among peers who are not in your circle of friends?
- 5) OLDER YOUTH ONLY: How much do you think younger teens and tweens are experiencing or witnessing these kinds of "harmful" relationships?

**Now, I want to show you a bunch of examples of people your age and their dating relationships. You'll see that I'm going to use a bunch of different types of examples. Some may be from TV shows, some**

may be from magazines, and some may even be from blogs. I will show each TV show example *twice* to be sure you've gotten it, and then we'll talk about what you thought. (NOTE: stimuli will be rotated across groups; all stimuli are appropriate for both genders unless otherwise specified)

**Questions to follow each example:**

- 1) What do you guys think about this?
- 2) Does stuff like this happen in romantic relationships?
- 3) Is this a good relationship or a bad relationship? Or neither?
- 4) Is s/he treating him/her well? Why or why not?
- 5) Do you think s/he should be stronger and not care about how s/he's acting?
- 6) What should s/he do?

**Now I'd like you to think of people in your own lives – or people in the public eye, like celebrities who are in an unhealthy relationship. Let's talk about those.** *Get a few volunteers to share their examples.*

- 1) What makes these relationships not work so well, in your mind?
- 2) Do these relationships make you think about doing anything differently in your own relationships? What?

**Issue B: Community, Societal and Entertainment Influences**

*(40 minutes)*

*The purpose of this section is explore how their perspectives on community, societal and entertainment factors may impact their perceptions of what is healthy, unhealthy and acceptable in dating relationships.*

Moderator to hand out a packet of index cards that have "influences" written on them to each respondent. **I'm giving each of you a stack of index cards. I'd like you to read through all of them, and you'll notice that each of them corresponds to something that might influence the way you think about relationships. For example: your mom, song lyrics, movies, TV shows, friends, etc. I'd like you to put these into 3 piles... Pile 1 should be those things that you think definitely influence your dating relationships, Pile 2 should be those things that definitely don't influence your dating relationships, and Pile 3 are those things that fall in the middle – they might influence you a bit, but you're not really sure.**

After card sort is completed, moderator to discuss each pile and why respondents selected each for pile 1, 2 and 3.

**Questions for each pile:**

- 1) Which cards did you have in Pile X? Why?
- 2) In what order would those cards fall – which has most influence, which has least?
- 3) How does what is written on that card influence how you think or act in a relationship?
- 4) Is it a good or bad influence on you? Why?

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**Issue C: Influence on Younger Tweens (for 15-18 year olds only)**

*(15 minutes – the previous sections will be shortened to accommodate this section for older youth)*

*The purpose of this section is to understand opportunities where older youth's influence on younger youth can be leveraged to help promote healthy dating relationships.*

- 1) Do you ever interact with younger teens? If so, under what circumstances?
- 2) How much influence, if any, do you think you have on younger kids in your neighborhood or at your school?
- 3) Who or what do you think has the greatest influence on the way younger teens view dating relationships?
- 4) So if you could wave a magic wand and change some of the things younger teens are exposed to, particularly in the area of relationships, what would you change?
- 5) Are you or your friends involved in mentoring or any programs where you try to have a positive influence on the younger kids?
- 6) How do you think younger people would respond if you attempted to talk with them about how they should act or be treated in a relationship?
- 7) What do you know about dating and relationships that you wish you knew about dating and relationships when you were 11 to 14?
- 8) How did you learn that? How do you wish you learned that?
- 9) Looking back, do you think you may have been open to hearing or learning more about relationships at an earlier time in your life? When?
- 10) Let's come up with the Top Ten things you want younger teens (or your younger brother or sister) to know about dating and relationships. What would you include?
- 11) If someone wanted to develop a campaign that tried to help younger teens and tweens learn about what's cool and not cool [insert their terms] in a relationship, what should they do or make sure of if they want a chance of getting the attention of younger teens and tweens?

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#### **Issue D: Conclusion**

*(5 minutes)*

- Check with CDC for additional questions
- Ask for any additional ideas from participants
- Thank participants for their time and ideas
- Provide departure instructions