

Making the Change Together

A curriculum resource to address gender-based violence prevention
and bystander intervention education



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Making the Change Together: A Curriculum Resource to Address Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Bystander Intervention Education Health Education Grades 7 and 8

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Grade 7

Why This Work Matters

Education plays a vital role in preventing gender-based violence (GBV) by providing young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to make informed decisions about their health, relationships, and well-being. Grade 7 marks a period of significant physical, emotional, and social change, as students experience increased independence, stronger peer influence, and expanded digital and social environments. Age-appropriate, skills-based learning during this stage is especially important for supporting healthy decision-making, relationship skills, and personal safety.

Building on the foundational learning in grades primary to 6 where students developed emotional literacy, personal safety skills, empathy, boundary awareness, and help-seeking behaviours—this work deepens students' ability to navigate more complex social situations and pressures. In grade 7, students strengthen life skills related to communication, self-management, and coping, while expanding their understanding of mental health, relationships, bodily autonomy, boundaries, consent, and the influence of peers, media, and social norms.

These lessons are essential for preventing GBV by helping students

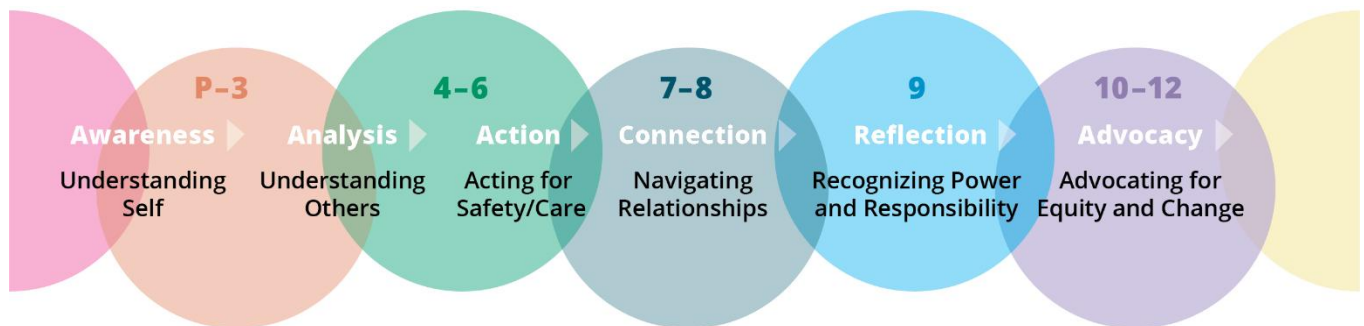
- recognize how peer pressure, media, and social norms can influence behaviour
- identify early signs of unhealthy or unsafe relationships
- understand how power imbalances increase risk
- practice skills for setting boundaries, supporting others, and seeking help when something feels unsafe or unfair

Through this learning, students build the awareness and confidence needed to navigate relationships with care, responsibility, and respect—both online and offline.

This learning directly supports the Mass Casualty Commission's Recommendation C.17, which calls for mandatory, province-wide, evidence-based learning that helps students recognize, prevent, and respond to harm. In Healthy Living 7, this includes analyzing the influence of social norms and media, strengthening mental health literacy, developing healthy relationship and communication skills, understanding

consent and boundaries, and practicing bystander intervention and help-seeking strategies. Each outcome builds the skills learners will need to form safe, caring, and equitable relationships throughout their lives. Every teacher of Healthy Living 7 plays a vital role in ensuring all children in Nova Scotia feel seen, safe, supported, and empowered.

Building healthier relationships involves a progression of teaching and learning concepts and skills through grades primary to 12:



Key Teaching and Learning Resources

The following suggested resources support teachers in planning and delivering learning experiences related to gender-based violence prevention, healthy relationships, personal safety, and well-being. These resources are designed to support professional judgment by offering adaptable activities, background knowledge, and discussion tools that can be integrated into existing curriculum-based learning experiences.

Teachers are encouraged to select, adapt, and integrate resources based on:

- student readiness and developmental level
- classroom context and community considerations
- alignment with specific curriculum outcomes and indicators
- time, comfort, and instructional goals

Where relevant, activities most closely aligned with specific grade-level outcomes have been identified within the suggested learning experiences section. Resources may also be used flexibly—for example, to support discussion, introduce or reinforce concepts, build skills over time, or deepen understanding of issues already being explored.

Unless otherwise indicated below, these resources can be accessed through the Gender-Based Violence Moodle.

Connect with Respect (UNESCO)

Connect with Respect is a curriculum resource developed by UNESCO that supports teachers in building knowledge and awareness related to gender equality, social cohesion, and respectful relationships among young people. The resource includes a professional learning component for educators, along with 30+ classroom-ready learning activities designed to strengthen students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The activities are developmentally appropriate for grades 5 to 9 and address topics such as communication, consent, power dynamics, stereotypes, social norms, and bystander responsibility. Lessons are designed to be interactive and skills-based, supporting discussion, reflection, and real-world application.

From the Ground Up: A Health Promotion and Harm Reduction Curriculum Resource to Address Youth Substance Use, Gaming, and Gambling

From the Ground Up is a health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling developed by the Province of Nova Scotia. This resource is grounded in harm reduction, inclusion, and strengths-based pedagogy, and emphasizes relational learning, communication skills, help-seeking, and reflection on risk, power, and decision-making.

Although the primary focus of *From the Ground Up* is substance use and related behaviours, individual lessons within each grade-level resource align with and can be used to support GBV prevention learning. Selected lessons that align with GBV-related outcomes have been identified in the suggested learning experiences section.

It's All One Curriculum

It's All One Curriculum is a comprehensive resource kit for a unified approach to teaching sexuality, gender, HIV, and human rights education. Developed by organizations like the Population Council and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), it provides guidelines and activities to help educators create curricula that are gender-sensitive, culturally appropriate, and grounded in evidence and human rights principles. The goal is to equip young people with the knowledge to make informed decisions, develop healthy relationships, and become advocates for their own and others' sexual and reproductive health.

Although broad in scope, select activities support learning related to healthy relationships, consent, power dynamics, and gender norms, making the resource relevant to GBV prevention learning.

Kids in the Know Personal Safety Program

Kids in the Know is a national, interactive personal safety education program developed by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. Designed for primary to high school, the program provides ready-to-use, age-appropriate lessons that build students' personal safety skills and reduce the risk of victimization online and offline.

Lessons focus on topics such as healthy relationships and boundaries, bodily autonomy, refusal and assertiveness skills, bystander strategies, online safety, and help-seeking. The program is widely used across Canada and is aligned with Health Education outcomes, supporting the development of confidence, critical thinking, and safety-related decision-making.



Educators with a GNSPES account can access the Kids in the Know Personal Safety Program and grade-level online training through the GNSPES landing page. Just go to “Learning Resources & Supports” and click the C3P icon.

MediaSmarts

MediaSmarts is a Canadian digital media literacy organization that develops research-informed, bilingual educational resources to support critical, safe, and responsible engagement with media and technology across grades primary to 12. Established in 1996, MediaSmarts provides adaptable lessons and frameworks grounded in evidence, ethics, and inclusion.

MediaSmarts resources support learning related to online safety, digital citizenship, media influence, misinformation, consent and boundaries in digital spaces, and critical thinking, making select lessons relevant to GBV prevention, particularly in relation to technology-facilitated harm.

Under Learning Resources & Supports in [GNSPES](#)

- “Implementing the Kids in the Know Program” online training modules by C3P

Found on the GBV Moodle, accessed through the GNSPES landing page under eLearning Commons:

- “A 101 on Youth Interpersonal Violence” by PREVnet (*YouTube*)
- “Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Sexual Health Education: Research & Resources” by SIECCAN

In this video, Dr. Jessica Wood shares key resources and research about comprehensive sexual health education and gender-based violence prevention.

- *Not Just the Tip Toolkit* by The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
Not Just the Tip is a professional resource that provides guidance and knowledge for educators teaching grades 4 to 9 to develop the skills and confidence they need to teach about sexuality and sexual health in a way that is intersectional, inclusive, and inspiring. *Not Just the Tip* provides educators with information, tools, and strategies to support their delivery of comprehensive sexual health education.
- *Teen Dating Violence Disclosures: Online Training for Educators* by PrevNet
The teen dating violence training modules are helpful for school staff working with children and youth. These modules share insights on how youth experience teen dating violence and the outcomes. It provides information on how you can respond to student disclosures of dating violence in an effective and trauma-informed way.
- *Trafficking and Exploitation Services (TESS) Website*
[TESS](#) is a partnership of over 70 agencies across Nova Scotia working together to respond to the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth. The website provides general information about human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, the services and supports available in Nova Scotia, upcoming events and training, resources for families and educators and the general public, and other news related to this topic.

From the [Nova Scotia School Book Bureau](#)

- *A Stronger Home* (NSSBB# 1007852)
- *Beyond the Basics: A Resource for Educators on Sexuality and Sexual Health 3rd Edition* (NSSBB# 2002142)
- *Boys Do Cry: Improving Boys' Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools* (NSSBB# 1007665)
- *The Big Bad Wolf in my House* (NSSBB# 2003022)

Growing Understandings

Growing understandings in gender-based violence prevention and bystander intervention education represent the core ideas and concepts students should meaningfully engage with in their learning. Students will continue to return to these understandings throughout their lives as they make choices about their safety, health, and well-being. Together, these growing understandings help build a strong foundation for lifelong learning and healthy decision-making.

The following growing understandings contribute to gender-based violence prevention within Healthy Living 7 curriculum:

- Understanding how our emotions, stress responses, and social pressures influence behaviour helps us make thoughtful choices and care for our own and others' well-being.
- Healthy relationships are built on honest communication, respect for boundaries and consent, and awareness of fairness and power in friendships, dating, family, and online relationships.
- Messages we see in media, peer groups, and society can shape beliefs about gender, identity, body image, and relationships, so learning to question stereotypes and misinformation supports safer and more inclusive communities.
- Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected, and recognizing warning signs, intervening safely, and seeking help are important ways we care for ourselves and others.

Some suggested learning experiences appear with an asterisk (*) which indicates the lesson has been offered at another grade level. In Health Education, revisiting concepts is developmentally appropriate and beneficial. As learners age, their lived experiences evolve, and repeating a lesson allows them to apply deeper insights and greater social awareness.

Words and ideas to explore:

This vocabulary is for educator use and can be integrated within learning experiences. Some words and ideas may be new for students at this grade level.

- barriers
- body Image
- boundary
- brain
- challenging life circumstances
- commercial sexual exploitation
- communicate
- community
- community resources
- coping
- culture
- digital communication tool
- dimensions of health
- disorder
- distress
- emotions
- equality
- family
- friendship
- gender
- gender-based violence
- gender expression
- grooming
- healthy/unhealthy
- help-seeking
- illness
- inclusive/exclusive
- influence
- interpersonal skills
- law
- luring
- media
- mental health
- notice
- online/offline
- peer
- peer pressure
- power imbalance
- qualities
- recruitment
- relationships
- reliable/unreliable sources
- repair
- respond
- risk
- safety (physical, emotional, social, sexual)
- self-management
- sexually explicit images
- social media
- social norms
- social setting
- societal expectations
- strategy
- stress response
- support
- tactics
- technique
- technology
- values
- verbal/non-verbal
- well-being

Life Skills for GBV Prevention

Outcome

Learners will analyse how life skills influence physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health.

Indicators

- **Analyse** ways in which peer, media, and social norms influence healthy decision-making.
- **Investigate** healthy ways of coping with difficult emotions and challenging life circumstances.
- **Investigate** interpersonal skills that enhance health.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Developing strong life skills helps students understand how emotions, social pressures, and relationships influence their choices and well-being. By examining how peer pressure, media, and social norms shape behaviour, students begin to recognize when expectations or influences feel unhealthy or unfair. Learning healthy ways to cope with difficult emotions and practice interpersonal skills such as communication, empathy, and boundary-setting supports safer decision-making during times of stress or challenge. These skills protect against GBV by helping students notice early signs of harm, respond to pressure, and seek help for themselves or others. Building this awareness lays the foundation for respectful relationships, personal safety, and shared responsibility for well-being.

Suggested learning experiences:

- ***Connect with Respect***

- Topic 3: Activity 4: Negative Health Impacts of Gender Norms*
 - > In this activity, students will identify how some gender norms have a negative effect on health and human rights.
- Topic 6: Activity 1: Skills for People Who Witness Violence*
 - > In this activity, students will explore the effects of violence on someone who witnesses or hears about violence.
- Topic 7: Activity 2: Where to Go for Help*
 - > In this activity, students will identify a range of people from whom students can seek support if experiencing or observing GBV and identify a range of people who students can support in their everyday lives to contribute to the reduction of GBV.

Safe Use of Technology

Outcome

Learners will analyse the relationships between health behaviours and physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health.

Indicator

- **Investigate** healthy behaviours for using new technologies and media.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Understanding how health behaviours influence physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being helps students develop the awareness needed to make safe and healthy choices. While learning about a range of health behaviours supports overall well-being, the strongest GBV connection in this outcome comes from investigating healthy ways of using new technologies and media. As digital spaces increasingly shape relationships, identity, and communication, students need skills to recognize unhealthy online behaviours, respond to pressure, and respect boundaries. These skills support GBV prevention by helping learners identify harm early, make safer choices in digital environments, and seek support when online interactions feel unsafe or unfair.

Suggested learning experiences:

- **It's All One Curriculum**
 - Activity 9: Selling Stereotypes: Analyzing Advertising*
 - > In this activity, students make a collage of female and male images from advertisements, analyse the ads' messages about gender, and create ads that break stereotypes.

- Kids in the Know Lessons

- Lesson 6: Online Safety
 - > In this lesson, students will consider the benefits and risks associated with the internet and advancing technologies. They will understand how content shared electronically can be misused and learn how to make safe and ethical decisions online.

- MediaSmarts

- [Behaving Ethically Online: Ethics and Values*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students consider how we come to hold values and how they affect our behaviour, especially online.
 - > Students discuss common positive and negative online behaviours and consider/compare assumptions versus facts/accurate statistics. They also explore how belief that something is common can impact whether or not we think a behaviour is acceptable.
 - > The teacher then uses a fable to introduce students to the ways that values can be communicated both overtly and implicitly and students discuss the ways in which their values have been communicated to them. They then turn specifically to the online context and consider what values they have learned about online behaviour and how they learned them.
 - > Finally, students consider scenarios that examine ethical questions online and role-play ways of resolving them.
- [Break the Fake: Verifying Information Online*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students participate in a workshop that teaches them four quick steps to verify online information.
 - > After practicing the four steps they create a public service announcement aimed at teaching one of the steps and spreading the message that it is necessary for everyone to fact-check information we see online every time we are going to share it or act on it.

- [Calling Out vs. Calling In: Helping Youth Respond to Casual Prejudice Online*](#)
 - > This lesson introduces students to the idea of “calling in”—reaching out to someone privately with the assumption that they didn’t mean to do any harm—and explores how this idea can be applied both to casual prejudice online and when responding to stereotyping and other negative representations in media. Finally, students explore the different benefits of “calling out” and “calling in,” and consider when the two strategies would be most appropriate.
- [Cyberbullying and Civic Participation*](#)
 - > This lesson allows students to explore the concepts of rules, values, and ethics and learn how they influence our decision-making. Students are then invited to consider how they can contribute to creating positive online cultures.
- [Getting the Toothpaste Back into the Tube: A Lesson on Online Information*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students watch a short video that compares getting rid of personal information online to getting toothpaste back into a tube. After a short discussion of how visual analogies like this work, students discuss the meaning of the video (that information online is *permanent*.)
 - > They then read a series of short scenarios that help them identify four further principles of information online: that it can be *copied*, that it can be seen by *unintended audiences*, that it can be seen by *larger audiences* than intended, and that it becomes *searchable*. Finally, students create a simple animation that illustrates one of these principles.
- [Impact! How to Make a Difference When You Witness Bullying Online*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students discuss reasons why they might be reluctant to intervene when they witness cyberbullying and identify ways that they can help without making things worse.
 - > They then use the interactive tool to help them decide how to navigate scenarios relating to being a witness to bullying and share their experiences to help them understand how important it is to think carefully before you act.
 - > Finally, students learn about "decision trees" and other infographics and create an original infographic to communicate what they've learned about how to intervene when they witness cyberbullying.

- [Just a Joke? Helping Youth Respond to Casual Prejudice*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students analyse media representations of relational aggression, such as sarcasm and put-down humour, then consider the ways in which digital communication may make it harder to recognize irony or satire and easier to hurt someone's feelings without knowing it.
 - > Students then consider how humour may be used to excuse prejudice and discuss ways of responding to it.
- [That's Not Cool*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students begin by considering one of five scenarios that illustrate unhealthy relationship behaviours relating to digital media: pressuring others to share private content, cyberstalking, harassment, and abuse of trust. Students then relate the scenarios to their own experience by brainstorming other examples of these behaviours and voting on which they feel are most relevant to their lives.
 - > The teacher then leads a guided discussion on the reasons why unhealthy behaviours may be more common when we communicate through digital media and ways in which they can be avoided or mitigated.
 - > Finally, students act out their own scenario in which they portray young people successfully dealing with one of the unhealthy relationship behaviours.
- [Where's the Line?*](#)
 - > This lesson aims to further online safety education and promote safe and responsible online behaviour. This happens through encouraging youth to make safe and ethical decisions online and helping youth to identify strategies and supports that are available to assist them with issues they may encounter online.

Mental Health Literacy

Outcome

Learners will reflect on the importance of mental health literacy.

Indicators

- **Investigate** the function of the brain in health and illness.
- **Compare** mental health states with mental illness.
- **Evaluate** ways of effectively managing a stress response.
- **Investigate** ways to support varied experiences of gender.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Understanding how the brain influences thoughts, feelings, and behaviour helps students recognize and respond to their own mental and emotional states. Learning to evaluate stress responses, distinguish between mental health and mental illness, and practice effective coping strategies supports self-regulation and empathy for others. Investigating help-seeking strategies helps students understand when support is needed and how to access it for themselves or others. These skills support GBV prevention by reducing stigma, strengthening emotional awareness, and helping learners recognize distress, respond with care, and seek help when situations feel unsafe or overwhelming.

Suggested learning experiences:

- **Kids in the Know**
 - Lesson 1: Emotions
 - > In this lesson, students increase their awareness of emotions and non-verbal language (i.e., gestures and postures).

Sexual and Reproductive Health Literacy

Outcome

Learners will evaluate ways to access reliable sexual health information that positively impacts adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

Indicators

- **Analyse** how body image impacts adolescent health.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Understanding how sexual and reproductive health information influences adolescent well-being helps students build confidence and make informed decisions about their bodies and health. While learning to access reliable sexual health information and examine how body image impacts health supports overall well-being, the strongest GBV connection in this outcome comes from recognizing how misinformation, unrealistic media portrayals, and body-based pressure can influence vulnerability and risk. Developing critical awareness of media messages and body image helps students challenge harmful norms, build positive self-identity, and set boundaries. These skills support GBV prevention by reducing stigma, supporting informed decision-making, and helping learners recognize and respond to pressure or behaviour that feels unsafe or unfair.

Suggested learning experiences:

- **Connect with Respect**
 - Topic 1: Activity 1: Gender and Equality*
 - > In this activity, students will learn about the difference between the terms sex and gender.

- **It's All One Curriculum**

- Activity 40: What You See In Me*
 - > In this activity, students discuss pressures related to physical appearance and write about an aspect of their own appearance that they feel good about. In small groups, each student hears characteristics unrelated to appearance that the others admire in him or her.

- **MediaSmarts**

- [Comic Book Characters](#)
 - > In this lesson, students learn how shapes are used in character design in comics and animation and look at how male and female characters are depicted in comic books. Using a Comic Book Analysis sheet, students will record the attributes of male and female comic book characters. As a class, students will record common patterns and discuss what messages about men and women are communicated. Students then design a comic book character that uses shapes to communicate what they think a real hero is.
- [Gender Stereotypes and Body Image](#)
 - > In this lesson, students are made aware of the dangers of gender stereotyping and the media's role in perpetuating gender stereotypes.
- [Girl in the Mirror](#)*
 - > In this lesson, students look at how gender stereotyping may discourage young women from becoming involved in politics. Students begin by discussing what is meant by the terms "politics" and "political action." With those definitions in mind, they create a "portrait of a politician" based on the traits and characteristics that are needed to be a political agent. Students then deconstruct media products aimed at girls and young women in order to identify the stereotypes contained within and understand how these may raise barriers to being politically active.
- [Image Gap](#)*
 - > This lesson helps students understand how self-image can influence lifestyle choices. Students begin by identifying those qualities they admire most in peers, and by comparing their self-image with these qualities. They learn to identify self-image "problems" and develop positive strategies for dealing with these problems.

- [Put Your Best Face Forward](#)*
- > In this lesson, students start by discussing the phenomenon of “selfies” and serve as experts in advising the teacher on the standards by which the “best” selfies are judged.
- > They then discuss a number of statements taken from interviews with youth that highlight issues of self-representation, body image, and gender standards, and learn about “photoshopping” images.
- > Finally, students apply what they have learned by modifying an image that is at least 50 years old to meet “selfie” standards.

Other books you can use in your practice (available from the [NSSBB](#)):

- *Love Your Body* (NSSBB# 2002730)

Safe and Healthy Relationships

Outcome

Learners will reflect on how relationships impact physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health.

Indicators

- **Investigate** the importance of addressing challenges in relationships with family, friends, or peers.
- **Analyse** ways of recognizing healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- **Formulate** ways for engaging in safe relationships online and offline.
- **Investigate** the risks of commercial sexual exploitation among youth.
- **Evaluate** the impacts of unhealthy relationships on the dimensions of health.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Reflecting on how relationships affect physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health helps students recognize the role relationships play in overall well-being and safety. Learning to identify healthy and unhealthy relationship patterns, address challenges with family, friends, or peers, and engage in safe relationships online and offline builds essential protective skills. Exploring the risks of commercial sexual exploitation and the impacts of unhealthy relationships helps students recognize how harm can occur through manipulation, pressure, or imbalance of power. These skills support GBV prevention by helping learners notice warning signs early, set and respect boundaries, and seek help when relationships feel unsafe or harmful.

In Nova Scotia, child sexual exploitation and human trafficking are real and documented concerns, with the province reporting some of the highest rates of police-reported human trafficking in Canada.¹ Research shows that exploitation most often begins through relationships with people children already know, using grooming, boundary-testing, and manipulation that can start weeks or months before harm is visible.^{2, 3, 4} Early learning that helps children recognize unsafe behaviours, trust their instincts, and seek help from safe adults is a critical prevention strategy.

Suggested learning experiences:

● *Connect with Respect*

- Topic 2, Activity 4: Positive and Negative Uses of Power*
 - > In this activity, students will consider the kinds of power that exist in various relationships, develop an understanding of the positive and negative uses of power, and identify positive and negative uses of power within peer and gender relationships.
- Topic 3, Activity 1: Awareness of Gender-Based Violence*
 - > In this activity, students will learn that violence has many forms including physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual, identify that at different times, people can be in the position of a target, witness or observer, perpetrator and/or accomplice, and the negative consequences of violence on each of these parties, and develop an understanding that discrimination and violence can often go together and have similar effects.
- Topic 3, Activity 2: What is Gender-Based Violence?*
- Topic 3, Activity 3: Effects of Gender-Based Violence*
 - > In this activity, students will define gender-based violence, provide examples of different types of gender-based violence, and recognize that anyone can be the target of gender-based violence, but that some groups are more likely to be targeted than others.
- Topic 3, Activity 3: Effects of Gender-Based Violence*
 - > In this activity, students will describe the kinds of GBV both males and females tend to observe, initiate or be the target of in and around school. They will identify the physical and psychological effects of school-related GBV on target(s), witness(es), accomplices, and perpetrator(s).
- Topic 4, Activity 2: Positive Rules for the Safe Learning Space*
 - > In this activity, students will make rules and agreements they need to support a safe, friendly, and equal learning environment for everyone in their class/school.
- Topic 4, Activity 4 - Making an Apology*
 - > In this activity, students will practice using empathy to devise and give an apology.

- Topic 5, Activity 1: Communication Skills for Respectful Relationships*
 - > In this activity, students will identify positive and negative attributes, actions, and attitudes in peer friendships.
- Topic 5, Activity 2: Respectful Relationships Between Boys and Girls*
 - > In this activity, students will identify the ways that positive attributes, actions, and attitudes can strengthen male-female relationships between siblings, friends, spouses, fellow students, and co-workers.
- ***From the Ground Up***
 - Lesson 2: Tough Talks
 - > In this lesson, learners will reflect on how relationships impact physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health.
- ***It's All One Curriculum***
 - Activity 27: My Relationships*
 - > In this activity, students create a visual representation of their relationships.
 - Activity 36: Practicing Assertive Communication*
 - > In this activity, students review assertive behaviours, discuss cultural implications, and practice using assertive communication in situations where rights are being abused.
- ***Kids in the Know***
 - Lesson 2: Safe and Unsafe Personal Boundaries
 - > In this lesson, students identify personal boundaries, boundary violations, and how healthy personal boundaries are important to personal safety. They understand they have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and understand their rights to establish personal boundaries. They identify what and who to tell when they need help.
 - Lesson 3: How to Set Personal Boundaries
 - > In this lesson, students identify how to establish personal boundaries and demonstrate establishing personal boundaries.

- Lesson 4: Friendship
 - > In this lesson, students identify healthy and unhealthy friendship and behaviour online and offline.
- Lesson 5: Relationships
 - > In this lesson, students will identify and consider important qualities in a person, friendship, and romantic relationship.
- Lesson 7: Getting Out of Unhealthy Situations
 - > In this lesson, students will identify how to avoid high risk situations online, how to respond to boundary transgressions online, and how to get help if they are, or a friend is, in an unsafe situation.

1. Statistics Canada. "Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2024." December 8, 2025. [Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2024](#).
2. Canada. [Table 2.4 Child and youth victims of police-reported family and non-family violence, by gender of victim and province or territory, 2018 to 2019](#).
3. Canada. "Online Child Sexual Exploitation." April 22, 2024. [Key Resources - Canada.ca](#).
4. Trafficking and Exploitation Services System (TESS). "Risk Factors and Warning Signs of CSEC [Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children]." <https://www.tessns.ca/warning-signs>.

Grade 8

Why This Work Matters

Education plays a vital role in preventing gender-based violence (GBV) by providing young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to make informed decisions about their health, relationships, and well-being. Grade 8 is a critical stage of adolescence, as students experience ongoing physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development, increased independence, and expanding peer, romantic, and online relationships. At this stage, students are more likely to encounter complex social pressures, exposure to sexualized media, and situations that require stronger boundary-setting, decision-making, and help-seeking skills.

This learning supports GBV prevention by helping students recognize patterns of coercion, control, and pressure; understand the role of consent and personal boundaries; and examine how power imbalances and social norms can contribute to harm. Through this learning, students strengthen their ability to make informed decisions, intervene safely as bystanders, and seek support when they or others experience unsafe or harmful situations. This focus supports the development of respectful, equitable relationships and reinforces shared responsibility for safety and well-being.

This learning plays an important role in preventing GBV by helping students

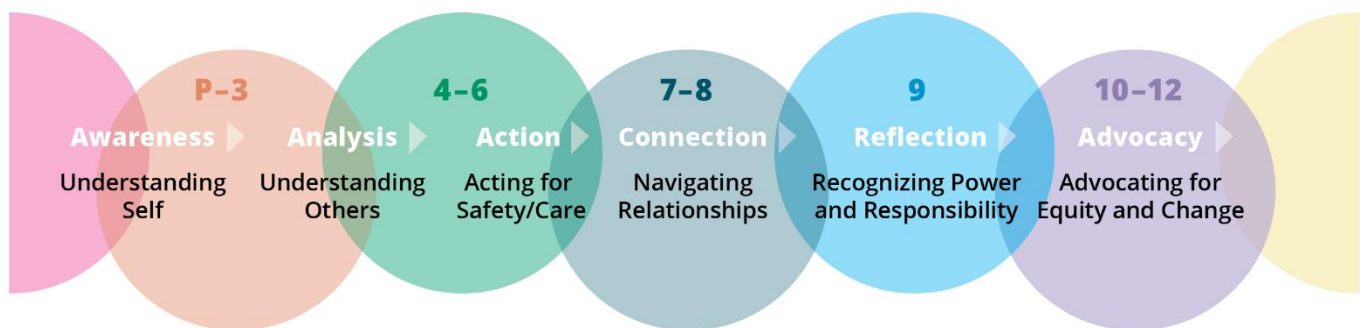
- recognize how peer pressure, media, and social norms can influence behaviour
- identify early signs of unhealthy or unsafe relationships
- understand how power imbalances increase risk
- practice skills for setting boundaries, supporting others, and seeking help when something feels unsafe or unfair

Through this learning, students build the awareness and confidence needed to navigate relationships with care, responsibility, and respect—both online and offline.

This learning directly supports the Mass Casualty Commission's Recommendation C.17, which calls for mandatory, province-wide, evidence-based learning that helps students recognize, prevent, and respond to harm. In Healthy Living 8, this includes strengthening bystander intervention skills; analyzing how social norms, media, and

power imbalances contribute to gender-based violence; developing strategies to reduce sexual violence; and learning how to seek help for themselves or others in unsafe situations. Each outcome builds the skills learners will need to form safe, caring, and equitable relationships throughout their lives. Every teacher of Healthy Living 8 plays a vital role in ensuring all children in Nova Scotia feel seen, safe, supported, and empowered.

Building healthier relationships involves a progression of teaching and learning concepts and skills through grades primary to 12:



Key Teaching and Learning Resources

The following suggested resources support teachers in planning and delivering learning experiences related to GBV prevention, healthy relationships, personal safety, and well-being. These resources are designed to support professional judgment by offering adaptable activities, background knowledge, and discussion tools that can be integrated into existing curriculum-based learning experiences.

Teachers are encouraged to select, adapt, and integrate resources based on:

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- time, comfort, and instructional goals

Where relevant, activities most closely aligned with specific grade-level outcomes have been identified within the suggested learning experiences section. Resources may also be used flexibly—for example, to support discussion, introduce or reinforce concepts, build skills over time, or deepen understanding of issues already being explored.

Unless otherwise indicated below, these resources can be accessed through the Gender-Based Violence Moodle.

Connect with Respect (UNESCO)

Connect with Respect is a curriculum resource developed by UNESCO that supports teachers in building knowledge and awareness related to gender equality, social cohesion, and respectful relationships among young people. The resource includes a professional learning component for educators, along with 30+ classroom-ready learning activities designed to strengthen students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The activities are developmentally appropriate for grades 5 to 9 and address topics such as communication, consent, power dynamics, stereotypes, social norms, and bystander responsibility. Lessons are designed to be interactive and skills-based, supporting discussion, reflection, and real-world application.

From the Ground Up: A Health Promotion and Harm Reduction Curriculum Resource to Address Youth Substance Use, Gaming, and Gambling

From the Ground Up is a health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling developed by the Province of Nova Scotia. This resource is grounded in harm reduction, inclusion, and strengths-based pedagogy, and emphasizes relational learning, communication skills, help-seeking, and reflection on risk, power, and decision-making.

Although the primary focus of *From the Ground Up* is substance use and related behaviours, individual lessons within each grade-level resource align with and can be used to support GBV prevention learning. Selected lessons that align with GBV-related outcomes have been identified in the suggested learning experiences section.

It's All One Curriculum

It's All One Curriculum is a comprehensive resource kit for a unified approach to teaching sexuality, gender, HIV, and human rights education. Developed by organizations like the Population Council and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), it provides guidelines and activities to help educators create curricula that are gender-sensitive, culturally appropriate, and grounded in evidence and human rights principles. The goal is to equip young people with the knowledge to make informed decisions, develop healthy relationships, and become advocates for their own and others' sexual and reproductive health.

Although broad in scope, select activities support learning related to healthy relationships, consent, power dynamics, and gender norms, making the resource relevant to GBV prevention learning.

Kids in the Know Personal Safety Program

Kids in the Know is a national, interactive personal safety education program developed by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. Designed for primary to high school, the program provides ready-to-use, age-appropriate lessons that build students' personal safety skills and reduce the risk of victimization online and offline.

Lessons focus on topics such as healthy relationships and boundaries, bodily autonomy, refusal and assertiveness skills, bystander strategies, online safety, and help-seeking. The program is widely used across Canada and is aligned with Health Education outcomes, supporting the development of confidence, critical thinking, and safety-related decision-making.



Educators with a GNSPES account can access the Kids in the Know Personal Safety Program and grade-level online training through the GNSPES landing page. Just go to “Learning Resources & Supports” and click the C3P icon.

MediaSmarts

MediaSmarts is a Canadian digital media literacy organization that develops research-informed, bilingual educational resources to support critical, safe, and responsible engagement with media and technology across grades primary to 12. Established in 1996, MediaSmarts provides adaptable lessons and frameworks grounded in evidence, ethics, and inclusion.

MediaSmarts resources support learning related to online safety, digital citizenship, media influence, misinformation, consent and boundaries in digital spaces, and critical thinking, making select lessons relevant to GBV prevention, particularly in relation to technology-facilitated harm.

OPHEA: Gender-Based Violence Prevention Education Resources

OPHEA (Ontario Physical and Health Education Association) is a registered charitable organization that supports health and well-being education through research-informed programs, partnerships, and professional learning. OPHEA’s [Gender-Based Violence Prevention Education Resources](#) are designed to build educator understanding and confidence in addressing GBV through early, honest, and developmentally appropriate classroom conversations.

The resources support learning related to gender-based violence and harassment, consent, healthy relationships, and systems of power, and emphasize the role of educators in creating safe, inclusive, and positive school communities.

Under Learning Resources & Supports in [GNSPES](#)

Found on the GBV Moodle, accessed through the GNSPES landing page under eLearning Commons:

- *Not Just the Tip Toolkit* by The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
Not Just the Tip is a professional resource that provides guidance and knowledge for educators teaching grades 4 to 9 to develop the skills and confidence they need to teach about sexuality and sexual health in a way that is intersectional, inclusive, and inspiring. *Not Just the Tip* provides educators with information, tools, and strategies to support their delivery of comprehensive sexual health education.
- Teen Dating Violence Disclosures: Online Training for Educators by PrevNet
The teen dating violence online training modules are helpful for school staff working with children and youth. These modules share insights on how youth experience teen dating violence and the outcomes. It provides information on how you can respond to student disclosures of dating violence in an effective and trauma-informed way.
- Trafficking and Exploitation Services (TESS) Website
[TESS](#) is a partnership of over 70 agencies across Nova Scotia working together to respond to the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth. The website provides general information about human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, the services and supports available in Nova Scotia, upcoming events and training, resources for families and educators and the general public, and other news related to this topic.

From the [Nova Scotia School Book Bureau](#)

- *A Stronger Home* (NSSBB# 1007852)
- *Beyond the Basics: A Resource for Educators on Sexuality and Sexual Health 3rd edition* (NSSBB# 2002142)
- *Boys Do Cry: Improving Boys' Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools* (NSSBB# 1007665)
- *The Big Bad Wolf in my House* (NSSBB# 2003022)
- Shift Education Circuit Kit (NSSBB# 2003271)

Growing Understandings

Growing understandings in GBV prevention and bystander intervention education represent the core ideas and concepts students should meaningfully engage with in their learning. Students will continue to return to these understandings throughout their lives as they make choices about their safety, health, and well-being. Together, these growing understandings help build a strong foundation for lifelong learning and healthy decision-making.

The following growing understandings contribute to GBV prevention within Healthy Living 8 curriculum:

- Understanding how our emotions, stress responses, and social pressures influence behaviour helps us make thoughtful choices and care for our own and others' well-being.
- Healthy relationships are built on honest communication, respect for boundaries and consent, and awareness of fairness and power in friendships, dating, family, and online relationships.
- Messages we see in media, peer groups, and society can shape beliefs about gender, identity, body image, and relationships, so learning to question stereotypes and misinformation supports safer and more inclusive communities.
- Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected, and recognizing warning signs, intervening safely, and seeking help are important ways we care for ourselves and others.

Some suggested learning experiences appear with an asterisk (*) which indicates the lesson has been offered at another grade level. In Health Education, revisiting concepts is developmentally appropriate and beneficial. As learners age, their lived experiences evolve, and repeating a lesson allows them to apply deeper insights and greater social awareness.

Words and ideas to explore:

This vocabulary is for educator use and can be integrated within learning experiences. Some words and ideas may be new for students at this grade level.

- anxiety
- assertiveness
- assess
- balance/
imbalance
- bias
- body image
- boundary
- brain
- challenging life
circumstances
- coercion
- communicate
- consent/
non-consent
- control
- coping
- cues
- culture
- digital
communication
tools
- discrimination
- distress
- domestic
violence
- emotions
- exploitation
- expression
- factors
- gender
- gender
expectations
- gender
expression
- gender identity
- gender norms
- gender
stereotypes
- grooming
- harassment
- healthy
decision-making
- healthy/
unhealthy
- help-seeking
- human
trafficking
- identity
- illness
- inclusion/
exclusion
- interpersonal
skills
- intimate
relationships
- intimidation
- law
- luring
- media
- mental health
- online/offline
- oppression
- peers
- peer pressure
- pornography
- power
- prejudice
- pressure
- problem
- refusal skills
- relationships
- reliable/unreliable
sources
- resilience
- respect
- rights
- risk
- safety
- sexual
orientation
- sexual violence
- sexually explicit
images
- social
determinants
of health
- social media
- social setting
- societal
expectations
- stereotype
- stigma
- strategy
- stress
- stress response
- support
- tactics
- techniques
- technology
- treatment
- values
(personal,
cultural,
societal, family)
- verbal/
non-verbal
- well-being

Life Skills for GBV Prevention

Outcome

Learners will investigate how health behaviours impact physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health.

Indicators

- **Analyse** factors that impact healthy decision-making.
- **Investigate** healthy ways of coping with difficult emotions and challenging life circumstances.
- **Investigate** interpersonal skills that enhance health.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Strengthening life skills helps students understand how emotions, stress, and social influences affect their choices and behaviour during adolescence. As peer pressure, media messaging, and social norms become more powerful, students may face increased pressure to take risks, tolerate harmful behaviour, or remain silent when something feels wrong. Learning healthy ways to cope with difficult emotions and practicing interpersonal skills such as communication, assertiveness, and boundary-setting supports safer decision-making in challenging situations. These skills support GBV prevention by helping students recognize unhealthy influences, respond to pressure, and seek help for themselves or others before harm escalates.

Suggested learning experiences:

- ***Connect with Respect***

- Topic 3: Activity 4: Negative Health Impacts of Gender Norms*
 - > In this activity, students will identify how some gender norms have a negative effect on health and human rights.
- Topic 6: Activity 1: Skills for People Who Witness Violence*
 - > In this activity, students will explore the effects of violence on someone who witnesses or hears about violence.
- Topic 7: Activity 2: Where to Go for Help*
 - > In this activity, students will identify a range of people from whom students can seek support if experiencing or observing GBV and identify a range of people who students can support in their everyday lives so as to contribute to the reduction of GBV

- ***From the Ground Up***

- Lesson 7: What the Heck's a Life Skill?
 - > In this lesson, students will differentiate between different types of coping strategies and reflect on their own life skills and coping strategies and areas that need more personal development. They will draw a connection between these specific skill sets and challenging times in their life and reflect on how these personal strategies helped them.

- ***Kids in the Know***

- Lesson 2: How We Think, How We Feel
 - > In this lesson, students will be able to challenge negative thinking and identify strategies for how to cope with situations and manage feelings.

Safe Use of Technology

Outcome

Learners will analyse the relationships between health behaviours and physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health.

Indicators

- **Investigate** healthy behaviours for using new technologies and media.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Understanding how health behaviours influence physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health helps students make informed choices that support overall well-being. While this outcome addresses a range of health behaviours, the strongest GBV connection in Healthy Living 8 comes from investigating healthy ways of using new technologies and media. As digital spaces increasingly shape relationships, identity, and social interactions, students may encounter pressure, harassment, coercion, or boundary violations online. Developing digital media literacy helps students recognize unhealthy or harmful online behaviours, understand how technology can be used to exert power or control, and make safer choices in digital environments. These skills support GBV prevention by helping learners identify risk, protect boundaries, and seek support when online interactions feel unsafe or harmful.

Suggested learning experiences:

- **It's All One Curriculum**
 - Activity 9: Selling Stereotypes: Analyzing Advertising*
 - > In this activity, students make a collage of female and male images from advertisements, analyse the ads' messages about gender, and create ads that break stereotypes.

- Kids in the Know

- Lesson 5: Online Safety
 - > In this lesson, students will consider the benefits and risks associated with the internet and advancing technologies and understand how content shared electronically can be misused. Students will learn how to make safe and ethical decisions online.

- MediaSmarts

- [Behaving Ethically Online: Ethics and Values](#)*
 - > In this lesson, students consider how we come to hold values and how they affect our behaviour, especially online. They begin by comparing their assumptions about how common positive and negative online behaviours are with accurate statistics, and then consider how believing that something is more or less common than it really is can affect whether or not we think it's acceptable. The teacher then uses a fable to introduce students to the ways that values can be communicated both overtly and implicitly and students discuss the ways in which their values have been communicated to them. They then turn specifically to the online context and consider what values they have learned about online behaviour and how they learned them. Finally, students consider scenarios that examine ethical questions online and role-play ways of resolving them.
- [Break the Fake: Verifying Information Online](#)*
 - > In this lesson, students participate in a workshop that teaches them four quick, easy steps to verify online information. After practicing these four steps they create a public service announcement aimed at teaching one of these steps and spreading the message that it is necessary for everyone to fact-check information we see online every time we are going to share it or act on it.
- [Calling Out vs. Calling In: Helping Youth Respond to Casual Prejudice Online](#)*
 - > This lesson introduces students to the idea of “calling in”—reaching out to someone privately with the assumption that they didn't mean to do any harm—and explores how this idea can be applied both to casual prejudice online and when responding to stereotyping and other negative representations in media. Finally, students explore the different benefits of

“calling out” and “calling in,” and consider when the two strategies would be most appropriate.

- [Cyberbullying and Civic Participation*](#)
 - > This lesson allows students to explore the concepts of rules, values and ethics and learn how they influence our decision-making. Students are then invited to consider how they can contribute to create positive online cultures.
- [Getting the Toothpaste Back into the Tube: A Lesson on Online Information*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students watch a short video that compares getting rid of personal information online to getting toothpaste back into a tube. After a short discussion of how visual analogies like this work, students discuss the meaning of the video (that information online is *permanent*.) They then read a series of short scenarios that help them identify four further principles of information online: that it can be *copied*, that it can be seen by *unintended audiences*, that it can be seen by *larger audiences* than intended, and that it becomes *searchable*. Finally, students create a simple animation that illustrates one of these principles.
- [Hate 2.0*](#)
 - > In groups, students research an online environment (*such as social networking sites*) and a particular example of that environment (*such as Facebook*) to learn the issues, strategies and tools relating to online hate in that environment.
- [Impact! How to Make a Difference When You Witness Bullying Online*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students discuss reasons why they might be reluctant to intervene when they witness cyberbullying and identify ways that they can help without making things worse. They then use the interactive tool to help them decide how to navigate scenarios relating to being a witness to bullying, and share their experiences to help them understand how important it is to think carefully before you act. Finally, students learn about "decision trees" and other infographics and create an original infographic to communicate what they've learned about how to intervene when they witness cyberbullying.)

- [Just a Joke? Helping Youth Respond to Casual Prejudice*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students analyse media representations of relational aggression, such as sarcasm and put-down humour, then consider the ways in which digital communication may make it harder to recognize irony or satire and easier to hurt someone's feelings without knowing it. Students then consider how humour may be used to excuse prejudice and discuss ways of responding to it.
- [That's Not Cool*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students begin by considering one of five scenarios that illustrate unhealthy relationship behaviours relating to digital media: pressuring others to share private content, cyberstalking, harassment and abuse of trust. Students then relate the scenarios to their own experience by brainstorming other examples of these behaviours and voting on which they feel are most relevant to their lives. The teacher then leads a guided discussion on the reasons why unhealthy behaviours may be more common when we communicate through digital media and ways in which they can be avoided or mitigated. Finally, students act out their own scenario in which they portray young people successfully dealing with one of the unhealthy relationship behaviours.
- [Thinking About Hate*](#)
 - > In this lesson, students develop their critical thinking skills by learning to recognize various types of bad faith arguments, including those that are used by hate mongers to spread misinformation and fuel hatred and intolerance.
- [Where's the Line?*](#)
 - > This lesson aims to further online safety education and promote safe and responsible online behaviour. This happens through encouraging youth to make safe and ethical decisions online and helping youth to identify strategies and supports that are available to assist them with issues they may encounter online.

Mental Health Literacy

Outcome

Learners will reflect on the importance of mental health literacy.

Indicators

- **Investigate** the function of the brain in health and illness.
- **Investigate** the role of stress and anxiety in maintaining positive mental health.
- **Evaluate** the impact of the myths and realities of mental health stigma.
- **Analyse** help seeking strategies.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Understanding how the brain influences thoughts, feelings, and behaviour helps students recognize how mental health affects decision-making, relationships, and responses to stress. Learning to identify stress and anxiety, challenge mental health stigma, and practice effective coping strategies supports emotional regulation and empathy for others. Analysing help-seeking strategies helps students understand when support is needed and how to access it for themselves or others. These skills support gender-based violence prevention by reducing stigma, strengthening awareness of distress, and helping students recognize when situations may be escalating and respond by seeking help or support.

Suggested learning experiences:

- **Kids in the Know**
 - Lesson 1: Identifying Feelings
 - > In this lesson, students will increase awareness of emotions and non-verbal language and demonstrate symbolic representation of emotions.
 - Lesson 2: How We Think, How We Feel
 - > In this lesson, students will be able to challenge negative thinking and identify strategies for how to cope with situations and manage feelings.

Consent and Bodily Autonomy

Outcome

Learners will evaluate ways to access reliable sexual health information that positively impacts adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

Indicators

- **Analyse** how body image impacts adolescent health.
- **Investigate** strategies for reducing sexual violence.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Understanding how sexual and reproductive health information influences adolescent well-being helps students build confidence and make informed decisions about their bodies and health. While this outcome addresses access to reliable sexual health information more broadly, the strongest GBV connection in Healthy Living 8 comes from examining how body image and strategies for reducing sexual violence influence safety and vulnerability. Media messages, social expectations, and sexualized norms can contribute to pressure, objectification, and harm. Developing critical awareness of body image and learning strategies to reduce sexual violence helps students challenge harmful norms, understand consent and boundaries, and recognize behaviours that increase risk. These skills support GBV prevention by strengthening self-worth, supporting informed decision-making, and helping students recognize and respond to situations that feel unsafe or coercive.

Suggested learning experiences:

- ***Connect with Respect***

- Topic 1: Activity 1: Gender and Equality*
 - > In this activity, students will learn about the difference between the terms sex and gender.
- Topic 3: Activity 1: Awareness of Gender-Based Violence*
 - > In this activity, students will learn that violence has many forms including physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual, identify that at different times, people can be in the position of a target, witness or observer, perpetrator and/or accomplice, and the negative consequences of violence on each of these parties, and develop an understanding that discrimination and violence can often go together and have similar effects.
- Topic 3: Activity 2: What is Gender-Based Violence?*
- > In this activity, students will define gender-based violence, provide examples of different types of gender-based violence, and recognize that anyone can be the target of gender-based violence, but that some groups are more likely to be targeted than others.

- ***It's All One Curriculum***

- Activity 40: What You See in Me*
 - > In this activity, students discuss pressures related to physical appearance and write about an aspect of their own appearance that they feel good about. In small groups, each student hears characteristics unrelated to appearance that the others admire in him or her.

- MediaSmarts

- [Exposing Gender Stereotypes](#)*

- > This is the first of three lessons that address gender stereotypes. The objective of this lesson is to encourage students to develop their own critical intelligence with regard to culturally inherited stereotypes, and to the images presented in the media—film and television, rock music, newspapers and magazines. In this lesson students take a look at their own assumptions about what it means to be a man, and what it means to be a woman. The brainstorming and discussion sessions are meant to encourage them to ask gender-specific questions as a step in the self-reflective process. Students will begin to see how believing in stereotypes can lead to violence towards oneself and others.

- [Learning Gender Stereotypes](#)*

- > This is the second of three lessons that address gender stereotypes. The objective of these lessons is to encourage students to develop their own critical intelligence with regard to culturally inherited stereotypes, and to the images presented in the media. The lesson begins with a review of stereotypes that are associated with men and women and their possible sources - including the role of the media. Students deconstruct a series of advertisements based on gender representation and answer questions about gender stereotyping about articles they have read.

- [The Impact of Gender Stereotypes](#)*

- > This is the third of three lessons that address gender stereotypes. The objective of these lessons is to encourage students to develop their own critical intelligence with regard to culturally inherited stereotypes, and to the images presented in the media. The lesson begins with a discussion about how self-violence may be promoted by the fashion industry, as well as on social media when men and women put their health at risk to attain impossible standards of attractiveness and thinness. Students also explore how stereotypes about masculinity can fuel male violence.

- [Girl in the Mirror](#)*
 - > In this lesson, students look at how gender stereotyping may discourage young women from becoming involved in politics. Students begin by discussing what is meant by the terms “politics” and “political action.” With those definitions in mind, they create a “portrait of a politician” based on the traits and characteristics that are needed to be a political agent. Students then deconstruct media products aimed at girls and young women in order to identify the stereotypes contained within and understand how these may raise barriers to being politically active.
- [Image Gap](#)*
 - > This lesson helps students understand how self-image can influence lifestyle choices. Students begin by identifying those qualities they admire most in peers, and by comparing their self-image with these qualities. They learn to identify self-image “problems” and develop positive strategies for dealing with these problems.
- [Marketing to Teens: Gender Roles in Advertising](#)*
 - > In this lesson, students explore gender roles in advertising by taking an ad campaign they have seen which is specifically directed to one gender, and redesigning the campaign to target the opposite gender.
- [Put Your Best Face Forward](#)*
 - > In this lesson, students start by discussing the phenomenon of “selfies” and serve as experts in advising the teacher on the standards by which the “best” selfies are judged. They then discuss a number of statements taken from interviews with youth that highlight issues of self-representation, body image and gender standards, and learn about “photoshopping” images. Finally, students apply what they have learned by modifying an image that is at least 50 years old to meet “selfie” standards.

Safe and Healthy Relationships

Outcome

Learners will reflect on how relationships impact physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health.

Indicators

- **Investigate** the importance of addressing challenges in relationships with family, friends, or peers.
- **Analyse** ways of recognizing healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- **Formulate** ways for engaging in safe relationships online and offline.
- **Identify** how to respond safely to coercive behaviours.
- **Reflect** on the importance of respecting the rights of others.

Why this outcome matters for GBV prevention:

Understanding how relationships affect physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health helps students recognize how power, communication, and respect shape safety and well-being. Learning to identify healthy and unhealthy relationship patterns, address challenges with family, friends, or peers, and engage in safe relationships online and offline builds essential protective skills. Recognizing and responding to coercive behaviours and reflecting on the importance of respecting the rights of others helps students understand how harm can occur through pressure, manipulation, or imbalance of power. These skills support gender-based violence prevention by helping students notice warning signs, set and respect boundaries, intervene safely, and seek help when relationships feel unsafe or harmful.

In Nova Scotia, child sexual exploitation and human trafficking are real and documented concerns, with the province reporting some of the highest rates of police-reported human trafficking in Canada.¹ Research shows that exploitation most often begins through relationships with people children already know, using grooming, boundary-testing, and manipulation that can start weeks or months before harm is visible.^{2, 3, 4} Early learning that helps children recognize unsafe

behaviours, trust their instincts, and seek help from safe adults is a critical prevention strategy.

Suggested learning experiences:

- ***Connect with Respect***

- Topic 2: Activity 2: Fairness, Equality, and Human Rights*
 - > In this activity, students will describe what they believe fair, equal, and respectful treatment would look like in families, schools, communities, and the workplace and advocate for the personal qualities needed to create a world where everyone is treated as if they are of equal value.
- Topic 2: Activity 3: Human Rights and Gender Equality in Everyday Moments*
 - > In this activity, students will identify what respect for gender equality and human rights could look like in everyday human interactions.
- Topic 2: Activity 4: Positive and Negative Uses of Power*
 - > In this activity, students will consider the kinds of power that exist in various relationships, develop an understanding of the positive and negative uses of power, and identify positive and negative uses of power within peer and gender relationships.
- Topic 2: Activity 5: Differences and Discrimination*
 - > In this activity, students will develop an understanding of the term discrimination, develop an awareness that discrimination is an abuse of power, and identify groups and sub-groups who are more likely to experience discrimination.
- Topic 2: Activity 6: Sexuality and Stigma*
 - > In this activity, students will develop awareness that some forms of gender-based discrimination are particularly severe for those who are transgender or same-sex attracted.

- Topic 3: Activity 1: Awareness of Gender-Based Violence*
 - > In this activity, students will learn that violence has many forms including physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual, identify that at different times, people can be in the position of a target, witness or observer, perpetrator and/or accomplice, and the negative consequences of violence on each of these parties, and develop an understanding that discrimination and violence can often go together and have similar effects.
- Topic 3: Activity 2: What is Gender-Based Violence?*
- Topic 3: Activity 3: Effects of Gender-Based Violence*
 - > In this activity, students will describe the kinds of gender-based violence both males and females tend to observe, initiate or be the target of in and around school. They will identify the physical and psychological effects of school-related gender-based violence on target(s), witness(es), accomplices, and perpetrator(s).
- Topic 4: Activity 2: Positive Rules for the Safe Learning Space*
 - > In this activity, students will make rules and agreements they need to support a safe, friendly, and equal learning environment for everyone in their class/school.
- Topic 5: Activity 1: Communication Skills for Respectful Relationships*
 - > In this activity, students will identify positive and negative attributes, actions, and attitudes in peer friendships.
- Topic 5: Activity 2: Respectful Relationships Between Boys and Girls*
 - > In this activity, students will identify the ways that positive attributes, actions, and attitudes can strengthen male-female relationships between siblings, friends, spouses, fellow students, and co-workers.
- Topic 5: Activity 3: Introducing Assertiveness*
 - > In this activity, students will learn the difference between assertive, aggressive, and submissive behaviour and practice assertive communication strategies to address or prevent GBV)

- Topic 5: Activity 4: Using 'I' Statements to Share Emotions and Assert Needs*
 - > In this activity, students will learn about and practice 'I' statements as an assertive communication strategy, practice use of 'I' statements in the context of preventing or reporting GBV, and practice expressing personal needs in a positive way, without blaming others.
- Topic 7: Activity 4: Messages of Support*
 - > In this activity, students will practice simple peer-support strategies.
- **It's All One Curriculum**
 - Activity 1: Why Fairness Matters*
 - > In this activity, students think about the issue of fairness by responding to quotations from prominent people.
 - Activity 27: My Relationships*
 - > In this activity, students create a visual representation of their relationships.
 - Activity 36: Practicing Assertive Communication*
 - > In this activity, students review assertive behaviours, discuss cultural implications, and practice using assertive communication in situations where rights are being abused.
- ***Kids in the Know***
 - Lesson 3: Safe and Unsafe Personal Boundaries
 - > In this lesson, students will be able to identify the difference between healthy/safe and unhealthy/unsafe personal boundaries and how healthy/safe personal boundaries are important to personal safety. They will be able to understand they have their rights to establish personal boundaries and the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
 - Lesson 4: Dating Relationships
 - > In this lesson, students will be able to define the behaviours associated with healthy versus unhealthy dating relationships online and offline and will be able to communicate risks associated with "sexting." They will be able to identify and recall very serious behaviour and common controlling behaviours.

- OPHEA

- Online Coercion Scenario Activity
 - > In this activity, students explore the feelings of the person in this scenario, taking note of the subtleties of the type of harassment that can occur in dating relationships occurring and communicating online. The activity encourages students to think about the importance of taking responsibility for managing their own emotions in a relationship, as they determine strategies for establishing, communicating, and respecting boundaries in online intimate relationships. Students explore ways of being a supportive bystander.

1. Statistics Canada. "Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2024." December 8, 2025. [Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2024](#).
2. Canada. [Table 2.4 Child and youth victims of police-reported family and non-family violence, by gender of victim and province or territory, 2018 to 2019](#).
3. Canada. "Online Child Sexual Exploitation." April 22, 2024. [Key Resources - Canada.ca](#).
4. Trafficking and Exploitation Services System (TESS). "Risk Factors and Warning Signs of CSEC [Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children]." <https://www.tessns.ca/warning-signs>.