

BE THE CHANGE

PARENT LETTER 2: HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

This lesson of the *Safer, Smarter Teens: Be The Change* curriculum covered the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Students learned definitions of important concepts, including:

- **Healthy Relationship:** There is a balance of power where healthy boundaries are protected; the relationship is positive, rational, productive, and supportive.
- **Unhealthy Relationship:** An imbalance of power that results in one person being controlled and manipulated by another person; boundaries are not respected, resulting in a destructive and negative relationship.
- **Personal Boundaries:** The guidelines or limits created to help protect a person and keep him or her safe. Personal thoughts and feelings that remain separate from others and allow us to take responsibility for what we think, feel, and do.
- **Balance of Power:** Equal and shared power by people in a relationship.
- **Self-Esteem:** How you think or feel about yourself.

The connection was made between self-esteem and relationships. The importance of maintaining personal boundaries was clarified to help students understand how to preserve the balance of power. When there is a shift in the balance of power, one person in the relationship can be manipulated and controlled by the other person. Your child also learned how to promote healthy relationships and strategies to deal with unhealthy relationships.

PARENT CONNECTION:

Teenagers are in the process of developing their personal moral and ethical boundaries. During the Draw the Line lesson, students considered what activities they think cross one of their personal boundaries. For example: Would you wear a bracelet that supports a cause you believe in? Would you let someone copy your homework? Would you tell a lie?

Take time to discuss boundaries with your teenagers. By reinforcing the information your child learned in this lesson, you can help him or her develop and maintain healthy relationships. Remember to try to remain open and non-judgmental. Be a safe person whom your teenager can come to if a boundary is crossed.

TIPS TO FURTHER TODAY'S LESSON:

Discuss the meaning of each of the following terms with your teenager:

- Trust
- Honesty
- Compromise
- Individuality
- Problem Solving

Help him or her make connections between each term and his or her personal boundaries. For example, "How important is trust in a relationship? Is it okay to tell a friend a lie?" Parents can continue the discussion from today's lesson, in which students considered issues such as whether it is okay to tell a lie to spare someone's feelings. For example, if you receive a gift that is not to your liking, do you say how much you like it, or admit you don't like it? What if a friend gets an unflattering haircut – do you tell him or her you don't like it, or do you pay the friend a compliment?