

Making Healthy Choices Scenarios

Scenario 1:

Your best friend recently started hanging out with another group of friends and when they are around, she pretends she doesn't even know you.

- It is common to experience changes in relationships as people go through puberty.
- Tell your friend how you feel using open communication, for example: *"I feel hurt when you ignore me around your new friends because our friendship is important to me."*
- Pursue your other friendships and interests until you and your friend are able to resolve the situation.

Scenario 2:

You've started hanging out with the popular group. You notice that they are always picking on your quiet, unpopular classmate.

- People who bully or pick on others often do not feel good about themselves – they may be insecure or they may want to fit in or look cool. But it is not cool to pick on others.
 - Do not do not laugh, stand by, or join in on the teasing.
 - As a bystander, you should take action, to stop the bullying. Do not stay quiet!
 - Remember that even standing by quietly makes you a part of the problem, because the person doing the teasing has an audience.
- Be true to your own values – if what you see does not seem right to you, speak up.
 - Use assertive communication: be clear and firm, without being aggressive. For example, *"Cut it out. I'm not ok with this."* Or *"This isn't funny."*
 - Question the behaviour: *"Why are you picking on *name of classmate*?"*
 - Threaten to leave: *"I'm not ok with this. If you're going to keep picking on *name of student*, I'm going to go. Anyone want to come with me?"*
- If some of the others in the group leave, those who are picking on the person won't have an audience and so they may stop.

- When you offer for anyone to come with you, you might invite the person being teased to join you too.
- If you speak up and they do not stop, ask yourself if you really want to continue hanging out with them.
- Talk to a trusted adult about the situation, especially if the bullying continues.

Scenario 3:

Your friends are asking dates to the school dance. You don't feel ready to date, but you're afraid your friends will make fun of you.

- Developing romantic feelings may occur during puberty, but this happens at different times for different people.
- It is ok if your friends are dating and you are not ready to date. You have a mind of your own - you do not have to do everything your friends do.
- You can choose to tell your friends that you are not ready to date, or you can choose to keep that to yourself.
 - Use assertive communication: *"I don't feel ready to date right now. I'm happy just hanging out with my friends."*
- If your friends tease you about it, remember that you are doing what is best for you. You can talk to them about how their teasing makes you feel.
 - Use assertive communication: *"I feel embarrassed when you tease me for not dating because you guys are my friends and what you think matters to me."*

Scenario 4:

The most popular person in your class is funny, a great hockey player, and liked by everyone. You feel jealous and wish you could be like that.

- It is common to look to others and think they *"have it all"*. Even that person who seems to have everything going for them has some insecurities.
- It helps to be aware of your own strengths and unique qualities. Maybe you are not very funny, but you are creative or smart. Maybe you are not a great hockey player, but you play and enjoy it and keep getting better every season. Maybe you are not

the most popular in the class, but you have a couple of good friends who like you for you. Maybe you have others strengths that the most popular person doesn't, and they look up to you.

Scenario 5:

Your classmates all seem to be developing at the same pace – they all seem to be growing taller and stronger, getting hair under their arms, and many of the girls are even developing breasts. But you're not developing as quickly and feel like you're falling behind.

- The changes during puberty happen at different times for everyone. It can be frustrating when you feel like you are the last one (or even the first one!) among your peers to go through these changes.
- Puberty causes a lot of changes in your brain and your body. Some of these changes you can see very easily, but others are harder to notice. Trust that your body is doing what it is supposed to.
- It can help to talk to a trusted adult about your feelings. You might even be surprised to learn that they had a similar experience.

Scenario 6:

You wear a new shirt to school and a few of your classmates make fun of you. You notice that some classmates always seem to look perfect, but you just can't seem to get it right.

- People sometimes make fun of others in order to look cool, often because they feel insecure. It is not right, but it does mean that what they are doing says more about them than it does about you.
 - If their teasing bothers you, speak up using assertive communication: "I like my new shirt, and I feel hurt when you tease me about it because I thought we were friends."
- Respond with humour or just roll with it:
 - *"Wow! I didn't realize people cared so much about my clothes!"*
- During adolescence, you may spend time trying to find your own identity and your own style, including what you like to wear. It is important to wear what makes you happy and feel good.

- Yes, some people seem to have a style – and usually it seems like it is “effortless” for those people. But often times, what looks easy and effortless actually took a lot of planning, trying on, and changing around.
 - **Optional:** Make the connection to the media and how appearance can be manipulated (e.g. stylists, airbrushing, filters, lighting, etc.).

Scenario 7:

Lately you find you're fighting with your parents every time you want to do something on your own. You feel grown up, but your parents still treat you like a little kid.

- Puberty is a time when young people become more independent and want to make decisions for themselves.
- As you begin to assert your independence, it will be very important that you have your parents' or guardians' trust.
 - You can earn and keep your parents' or guardians' trust by being honest with them, talking to them in a respectful and calm way (especially when things do not go your way), respecting the limits they set, showing responsibility (e.g. doing chores without being asked, getting your homework done without being reminded).
- Remember to use good communication, especially when you and your parents or guardians disagree.
 - Avoid distractions and show them that you are listening, be clear in what you are saying, stay calm, use “*I statements*”, etc.
 - For example, “*I feel frustrated when you won't let me stay out past 8 o'clock, because I am growing up and want more time with my friends.*”
 - For example, “*I feel upset when you won't let me play on my PlayStation with my friends after 9 o'clock, because this is how I talk to them and want to spend more time with them.*”

Scenario 8:

Your friends are planning to sneak out at midnight to meet at the park. You really want to join but haven't snuck out and don't want to get in trouble.

- Trust your gut and think about the consequences that might happen if you join your friends.
- You want to make sure you always ask your parents permission before doing something that might get you in trouble.
- Be honest with your friends and say, *“I’d like to join, however, I will get in a lot of trouble and don’t want to disrespect my parents/guardians rules”*.
- As you begin to assert your independence, it will be very important that you have your parents’ or guardians’ trust.
 - You can earn and keep your parents’ or guardians’ trust by respecting the limits they set, showing responsibility, and obeying their rules.

Scenario 9:

You’ve started having romantic feelings for one of your friends and you don’t know what to do about it.

- Developing romantic feelings for others is common during puberty, though it happens at different times for different people.
- You can be direct and tell your friend how you feel, and, if you want, you ask your friend if he, she, or they feel the same way.
 - Talking to your friend might change your relationship – it may make things a little uncomfortable if your friend doesn’t share your feelings; or, if the feelings are mutual, your friend and you may want to start a romantic relationship.
 - If you feel ready to date, it is important to talk to your parents or guardians about dating before you ask anyone out (or accept a date).
- If you are not ready to talk to your friend about it or if you are not sure if you want your relationship to change, you should consider staying friends. Remember that the same qualities that make for a good friendship are the foundations for a healthy romantic relationship, which might come later on.
- It is always a good idea to talk to a trusted adult. Often, they will have been through similar situations themselves and can offer you good and healthy advice.

Scenario 10:

Your parents told you to be home by 8pm, but your friends are pressuring you to stay a little longer.

- Growing up means being responsible and showing your parents that they can trust you.
- Respecting the limits they set for you is an important part of earning and keeping their trust.
- It can be very difficult to say ‘no’ to your friends when they are pressuring you, especially if you are having a good time, but if you are clear and firm from the start, chances are they will not try to pressure you in the future – they will know you are not easy to push around.
- Tell your friends in a clear and firm voice that you will be leaving.
 - Use assertive communication: *“Thanks, guys. I’m having a great time, but I’m going home. I’ll see you tomorrow!”* or *“I’m not going to stay.”*
 - Remember, you do not need to give an explanation or excuse.
 - Avoid using language like “I have to” or “I can’t”, because your friends may try to challenge you: *“you don’t have to leave”* or *“you can stay”*. It is more difficult to challenge statements like *“I am leaving”* or *“I will not stay”*.

Scenario II:

Ever since your friend started dating Sam, you never see him anymore. You’ve tried talking to him about it, but he says you’re just jealous.

- It is common to experience changes in relationships as people go through puberty, especially as some of our friends start dating.
 - Try to remember that this is new for your friend too, and sometimes it takes time to learn how to balance new relationships with friendships.
- Tell your friend how you feel using assertive communication, for example: *“I feel sad when you don’t make time to hang out with me because your friendship is important to me.”*
- Make an effort to get to know Sam by hanging out with the two of them.
 - Try suggesting an activity that you could do with your friend and Sam. For example, *“Hey! Do you guys want to go to the water park on Saturday?”*

- If your friend does not seem interested in addressing this or if you feel your friend is being unfair, you might want to think about pursuing other friendships and interests until you and your friend are able to resolve the situation.

Scenario 12:

Your friend got a new girlfriend and he says he's happy, but she's always making fun of him or bossing him around.

- Remember the S.H.A.R.E. acronym: healthy relationships can all be very different, but they all have 5 things in common: Safety, Honesty, Acceptance, Respect, and Enjoyment. It sounds like this relationship may not be a healthy one (lacking respect and acceptance, for example).
- Talk to your friend. Ask him how his relationship with his girlfriend is going. You can also ask him directly whether he is happy or whether it bothers him when she makes fun of him or bosses him around.
- Use "I statements" to express your concerns to your friend.
 - For example, "I feel concerned that your girlfriend is hurting you by the way she talks to you." or "I am worried about you because you are important to me."
- Be prepared that your friend may get defensive. If this happens, resist the urge to become defensive or frustrated. Instead, stay calm and remind him, "I am not trying to judge. I just want you to know I'm here and I'm your friend."
- If you are concerned and your conversations with your friend have not helped, or if you are not sure what to do, talk to a trusted adult.