

# MY RELATIONSHIPS: DILEMMAS



## Lesson Objectives:

- Children will explore a variety of different relationships, including those within the family, friendships and romantic.
- Children will consider how it might feel to have romantic feelings or a crush on someone, and what it means to have a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Children will explore peer pressure to have a partner, even at this age and what the unwritten rules of having a partner might be.
- Children will understand that romantic relationships are something they can choose and should never feel pressured. Like friendships should be built on qualities of mutual respect and should help them feel good about themselves.

## Key Messages:

Managing relationships can be tough. Whether we are talking about friendships or personal relationships with boyfriends or girlfriends. It may be some way off still before your child has their first real 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' but that doesn't mean that they aren't already feeling the pressure from their peers. Learning what the rules are and what expectations their may be for the.

In all likelihood, any girlfriends or boyfriends they do have at this age will mainly be in name only - and their will be little or no real interaction between the couple.... but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't talk about the fact and help children develop the skills they need to manage these relationships in the future.

The skills you need to manage personal relationships are the same you need to manage friendships. They are all good skills to practice and hone.

In this session we will discuss the rules of friendships and personal relationships. Children will think about any differences between being friends or having a boyfriend or girlfriend and what this may mean at this age and in the future.

## Closing:

Some children at your age may decide that they would like to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. They may start to have romantic feelings for people they have never had before. This may feel confusing... and this is perfectly normal. It is also OK to feel like this is something you're not ready for too. This is not immature - knowing your own mind is never immature...

You should never feel pressured into having a relationship. You get to choose. Make sure that any friendships are based on mutual respect and make you happy and make you feel good about being you. Relationships should never make you feel bad or be secret.



## Key Messages continued:

We will talk about crushes and how these intense feelings can be managed. The class will watch the Pixar animation *In a Heartbeat*. Children will then be given relationship problems to discuss and try to solve. These will include online relationships. We do not deal with online relationships as something separate - the rules in the 'real' world should be the same online.

One of our scenarios involves Jay making friends with someone through X-box live. This scenario has been put in to highlight the risks of meeting people in secret or online. The boy may well be another boy who just wants to be friends. But they may not be. The key is instead to make it clear we should never meet people in secret. We are at real risk if people don't know where we are or who we are with. The safest solution is to invite the boy to his house... or to meet somewhere neutral with their parents in tow... If they aren't who they say they are they won't come or show up. Importantly, having parents and children on the same team keeps them safe.

This scenario is important for parents as it is for children. Parents often wrongly simply dismiss it and say no and that plays into the hands of potential groomers... instead embrace the friendships and offer to be involved. If they aren't who they say they are they will swiftly disappear - where as if you dismiss them, the potential groomer can use this as further proof you don't understand your child like they do and use it as a wedge to keep the grooming secret as Jay is tempted to do.

Adults often miss the point that online is actually an important place where children can make friends... the issue is how to stay safe.

## X-box friend scenario:

*Jay has been talking to a boy online for a while - they were both playing on x-box live and having a laugh. Now they play most nights together online... and are fast becoming best friends - they have so much in common. the boy has told Jay that he lives near by and asked to meet up so they can play in real life... but his mum has said no... Jay is thinking about meeting up anyway - he could easily lie and tell his mum he is playing with Brian or Dylan....*

## Useful Links:

- check out the books in our library suggestions around friendships and secrets.

## CARRYING ON THE CONVERSATION AT HOME:



Talk to your child about their friendships. Talk regularly about how things are in school or in any clubs they may attend. Why is getting on with who, who has fallen out - discuss how they feel about any developments and show interest. It is very easy to get drawn in to solving your child's relationship dilemmas - instead ask them what they think they could do....

When you watch TV shows together, discuss the relationships on screen, again ask how they would solve the character's problems... what would they do in that situation? Ask them if they understand why the character's have fallen out or what they could have done differently. These are all ways of practicing these skills of managing relationships.

Talk to them about the world they see around them... ask them what the rules are... for example..

*Do you have to get married?*

*Do you have to have children? How many?*

*Can two men love each other and get married?*

*Can two women....?*

*Can they have children...?*

*What about at your age...? is there pressure to have a girlfriend or boyfriend? How do they feel about this.*

Try not to make fun of them for having a girlfriend or boyfriend... it may only be in name only, but you are setting the tone for how you both manage their future relationships.