

## ***Relationship Smarts and the Georgia Performance Standards in Health Education.***

The *Relationship Smarts* (RS) curriculum includes 13 lessons that focus on personal development related to goals and values, distinguishing between healthy versus unhealthy relationship behaviors and safe choices in forming relationships, developing communication skills, and preparation for adult roles and responsibilities related to parenting and marriage. A complete description of each lesson is provided in Appendix A.

Specific to the Georgia Department of Education's performance standards in health education<sup>1</sup>, RS:

- Supports health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health by providing personal and relationship reasons to choose abstinence.
- Helps teens analyze the influence of family, peer, culture, and media on healthy behaviors by teaching violence prevention, maturity and values, and family and peer influences on adolescent romantic relationships.
- Provides access to valid information, products and services to enhance health through accurate, research based information about healthy and unhealthy relationships, and encourages the acquisition of education or counseling for relationship problems.
- Promotes the use of interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and to avoid or reduce health risks by teaching adolescents effective communication skills and violence prevention.
- Teaches decision-making skills to enhance health by teaching adolescents the principles of smart relationships and teaching them to “decide versus slide” in regard to romantic relationships.
- Teaches health oriented goal-setting skills through topics focused on future orientation, goals, and planning.
- Allows adolescents to demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce or avoid health risks by teaching effective communication skills for solving problems, recognizing and addressing dating abuse situations, and making smart dating choices.
- Allows adolescents to demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community healthy by promoting increased ability to communicate in writing, orally, and visually about what makes relationships healthy or unhealthy and allows them to communicate with parents and peers about personal choices about relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> The Georgia Department of Education Performance standards are available at <https://www.georgiastandards.org/>.

## **Appendix A: OVERVIEW OF THE RS+ CURRICULUM (2007) CONTENT**

### **Part 1: Foundation for Understanding Romantic Relationships**

**Lesson 1:** “*Who am I and Where am I Going?*” helps adolescents get in touch with their sense of identity and possible selves. Identity formation is a central task of adolescence that influences and is influenced by experiences in romantic and other close relationships. Emphasis is placed on who the adolescent is within their family, friendship, and dating relationship contexts. The adolescents create a possible selves tree in order to visualize their future self-goals and ways to attain them. The lesson concludes with adolescents addressing ways to stay true to themselves when faced with peer pressure.

**Lesson 2:** “*Maturity Issues and What I Value*” explores the concept of maturity. It identifies four aspects of maturity—physical, emotional, mental and social—and points out how the latter three don’t happen on their own, but take conscious effort. The lesson then moves on to an activity, “a values auction,” that helps participants identify the values that are important to them.

**Lesson 3:** “*Attractions and Infatuation*” begins with a "relationship pyramid" schematic that assists teens in thinking about the building blocks of good relationships. Adolescents are helped to visualize the foundation of good relationships that include: common interests, having fun together, talking to each other, and developing a real friendship. In addition, the chemistry of attraction and the nature of infatuation are explored.

**Lesson 4:** “*Love and Intimacy*” gets teens thinking about the meaning of the words love and intimacy. First, teacher selected pictures from teen magazines are used to help adolescents learn about the differences and connections between love and lust. Next, the three important aspects of mature love—that is, passion, intimacy, and commitment are examined. The last part of the session builds an understanding of intimacy and how it develops.

### **Part 2: Knowledge about Dating Relationship Processes**

**Lesson 5:** “*Principles of Smart Relationships*” provides practical guidance for developing positive relationships. The first part introduces seven principles for "smart" dating. Teens learn that they *can* fall in love with their brain turned on by paying attention to these seven principles. Activities, such as identifying Smart and Not-so-Smart relationship decisions, provide practice for applying these insights to real world teen relationships.

**Lesson 6:** “*The Low-risk Relationship Strategy: Decide, Don’t Slide!*” explores why people can easily get swept up and involved with poor relationship choices. Too often young people slide into situations instead of making clear decisions with good knowledge about the person they are attracted to. This lesson aims to build skills and awareness for how to take a “go-slow, go-smart” approach toward building relationships and avoiding the sometimes high-costs of sliding. Teens explore, through four different activities, steps to take to really get to know someone they are dating.

**Lesson 7:** “*Is It a Healthy Relationship?*” offers concrete and practical guidance about how to tell if a relationship is healthy or unhealthy. By trying to answer three essential questions the lesson explores what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like in the real world. A fun sculpting activity aids in visualizing the negative and positive answers to the questions.

**Lesson 8:** “*Breaking up and Dating Abuse*” increases teens’ awareness of what abuse looks like in relationships and stresses that abusive relationships are unhealthy and unsafe. Thought provoking activities and an educational video are used to help teens understand the forms abuse takes and ways to avoid or get out of abusive relationships. In addition, adolescents learn that even relationships that are not abusive may need to end, and guidelines are offered for knowing when it's time to break up, better and worse ways to break up, and steps for moving on.

### **Part 3: Communication Skills for Healthy Relationships and Marriages.**

**Lesson 9:** “*A Foundation for Good Communication*” provides students with a strong foundation for effective communication in couple relationships. After considering the positive and negative communication patterns students have learned within their families, the basic elements of listening openly and speaking clearly are reviewed. Ways to engage in problem solving also are covered. The lesson concludes with opportunities to practice important skills for good communication.

**Lesson 10:** “*Communication Challenges*” looks more extensively at challenges to good communication and ways to address negative communication patterns in a relationship. Students are introduced to patterns that damage relationships and how to recognize the warning signs of troubled communication. Next students have opportunities to practice different strategies to change negative communication patterns into positive ones.

### **Part 4: Marriage and Planning for the Future.**

**Lesson 11:** “*Why Parents’ Relationships Really Matter to Children*” aims to build an awareness of how and why a *healthy* marriage matters. Specifically, teens learn how parents’ relationships matter to children. They also focus on the importance of fathers. Activities are designed so that teens can vividly see things from a *child’s* eyes and heart.

**Lesson 12:** “*Increasing the Odds of Having a Healthy Marriage Someday*” helps teens learn about wise mate selection and reasons why some marriages succeed and others fail. Through activities, they learn why the choices they make in the present can take them down paths that will either lead them towards or away from a successful marriage.

**Lesson 13:** “*Follow Your North Star*” provides a final lesson where teens will first review core concepts and then work together to produce a mural summarizing the key insights and information they have learned in this unit. Then, they will begin to work individually on their own “success plans” in session. They will continue and finish these plans outside of class.