

Research into what helps couples to thrive used to teach teenagers about healthy relationships

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Research showing the key features of healthy relationships will be used in schools around the country to help teenagers learn how to build healthy relationships of their own.

New lesson plans will help support teachers to bust common myths about the 'perfect [relationship](#)' to manage [young people](#)'s expectations. They use a gym theme to show that, like getting fit, relationships are fun but require work.

From September 2020, relationship education (rather than just sex education) will be compulsory in all schools. Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education classes will be updated to ensure that young people learn both how to build and maintain [healthy relationships](#) and how relationships can affect physical and [mental health](#) and well-being.

In response to these changes to the curriculum the new teaching resources, developed by the University of Exeter, will be launched today and shared with the 20,000 Key Stage 4 teaching staff and professionals on the mailing list of the PSHE Association. The materials, which are freely available to schools, have recently been awarded the prestigious PSHE Association's quality mark, only given to selected resources which are at the leading edge of effective teaching practice in PSHE education.

The lesson plans, aimed at Key Stage 4 pupils, were devised by Prof. Anne Barlow and Dr. Jan Ewing at the University of Exeter Law School and have also been tested out in local schools. They draw on the findings of an innovative 10-year research project on what helps [long term relationships](#) to thrive, supported by prominent divorce lawyer Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia LVO. Their format and key messages were designed in conjunction with groups of [school](#) students in the South West.

Dr. Ewing said: "These resources will support teachers to help children build healthy lasting relationships, as well as find support and recognise the signs of an unhealthy relationship. We are thrilled that the PSHE Association has recognised the quality of the resources and hope that the [teaching materials](#) will help teachers to become more confident about delivering what can be a sensitive topic."

Professor Barlow said: "Our research has told us a lot about the features of healthy, happy relationships. Teaching resources have historically focused on avoiding unhealthy relationships, which of course is essential, but young people also need to learn how to build positive, vibrant relationships. We welcome the change of emphasis to relationships education in the new PHSE curriculum. Our resources will help students to recognise both positive and negative relationship behaviours and build relationship skills for their futures."

Built around a short animation and accompanying infographic, the free to use interactive 2-part lesson plans, [Working Out Relationships?](#) feature two fictitious 16-year old couples. One relationship involves a controlling partner, and pupils will learn how to avoid such relationships and, where necessary, how to exit one safely. The other is a healthy relationship, and pupils will learn strategies to start to build positive, potentially lasting, relationships. The lesson plans meet the requirements of the new legislation.

Provided by University of Exeter

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