“RECEIVING TEXT MESSAGES”

SESSION PLAN

Preparation needed

- **Projector/Pc if needed**
- **Flipchart/whiteboard and marker pens if needed**
- **Powerpoint slides for the scenario**

Reflection

- Consider the last session and spend a short length of time covering any learning points and observations since the last session.
- If relevant **ask** – has anyone done anything that was influenced by this session?
- Reference any relevant news/information to update on previous session.
- Re-do/remind the group the GROUP AGREEMENT.

Setting the Scene

Learning Intentions:

- **To recognise abuse within early intimate relationships.**
- **To understand how modern technology contributes to control and abuse in relationships.**
- **To recognise the role of bystanders and ways in which bystanders can intervene.**

- **Introduce the session** – Inform the group that this session will explore the issue of abuse within an intimate relationship.
- Remind the group that for the session they are bystanders to a scenario.
- **Hands up** if you have been aware of this happening in your school or with friends? – Have group discuss their thoughts and share any examples if appropriate.

The Scene

Have a volunteer read aloud the scenario. Thereafter read the scenario yourself.

Your friend constantly receives text messages from her boyfriend. He asks her where she is, who she's with and what she's doing. This isn't just friendly chat; you get the feeling that he's obsessed and jealous, and always needs to know her every move.

Ask the group whether this is a realistic and relevant scenario. Could this happen?

Ask the group to discuss and identify any red flags in the scenario. Clarify you are looking for the words/phrases that appear wrong or unhealthy.

After few minutes **ask** the group to share some of the red flags they have identified.

Ask the group to raise their hands if they feel there is something wrong / hurtful in this scenario. Ask the group to look around the room at the responses from their peers.

My Challenges

Ask the group to discuss with a partner or within small groups what they are thinking when they read this scenario.

After a few minutes **ask** students for responses/feedback. Thereafter read aloud and show the following **train of thought.**

Why does he need to know what she's doing all the time? What is his problem … is he trying to control her? … This can't be healthy … Can't she see what he is doing? Maybe she thinks this is what love is like … I'm not sure it is any of my business. After all, I wouldn't want other people messing with my relationships … Then again, this doesn't seem right ... But if I say something, she might fall out with me or think I'm just jealous of her relationship … What should I do?

Ask – What reasons might someone give for not getting involved?
Fear, don't know what to do, is it my business, might lose a friend etc.

Discussion Time

ADU (Agree/Disagree/Unsure Activity & Discussion

Statement - <u>It is sometimes okay for a boy to control who his girlfriend sees and what she does.</u>

Give a short amount of time for the group to make their choice. Then ask 2-3 people in each group: Why did you agree/disagree/why are you unsure?

Ask the group:

1. Do you think if a girl often spent time in the company of other boys, that would make it okay to text like this? *Take some ideas from the group and reiterate that this isn't an excuse for controlling behaviour and that control is a form of abuse.*

2. What if she had cheated on her boyfriend in the past, or was disrespectful to him, would that make it okay? *Take some ideas from the group and reiterate that this isn't an excuse for abusive behaviour and that if the relationship is unhealthy like that, why be in it?*

Reinforce to the group that excessive text messaging could be a sign of an unhealthy and potentially abusive relationship, and there is never an excuse for abuse in relationships. Excessive texting can make a person feel uncomfortable or under pressure. In some circumstances fewer messages might have the same impact depending on the content of those messages.

Ask group to sit down.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Ask the group:

1. Why might the boy send texts asking where his girlfriend is and who she is with? *Responses may include: Maybe he feels insecure, maybe he thinks she's cheating, maybe he's worried about her, maybe he is thinking about meeting her.*

2. How might the girl receiving the messages feel when she reads the content? *Remind the group that although this scenario is using the example of a boy/girl relationship, this kind of thing can happen just as easily in boy/boy or girl/girl relationships. Suggestions might include: She might feel anxious or afraid, might wonder why he is asking, perhaps worry he will be annoyed if she doesn't answer the way he wants her to, might feel like she should go home or be with him to keep him happy etc.*

3. Do you think some girls might not think this sort of behaviour is a problem? Why? *Suggest: Girls are subject to the same media stereotypes and influences as boys and some might believe that they should be submissive to their boyfriend to keep him happy. Some girls might think he's only sending so many messages because he is worried about her or really loves her. How would you feel if this was happening to you? Would you see this behaviour as controlling, or okay?*

4. Do you think what's happening here could be a form of abuse? *Take some ideas then let the group know that control is a form of abuse as it is about power, and making someone feel they should do what you want them to do.*

5. It asks in the train of thought 'Is he trying to control her?'. What sort of things might someone in a relationship try to control? *Responses to include: What their partner does, who they spend time with, what they wear, where they go etc.*

6. Is this constant text messaging asking these questions a form of control? If this behaviour goes unchallenged, what might the boy think? *Suggestions: That she is willing to do what he tells her; That she thinks he has the right to know her every move etc.*

7. Could this potentially lead to other forms of abuse? Like what? *Take ideas from the group and suggest that if early control goes unchallenged and accepted, the boy will think his behaviour is acceptable and this could lead to other forms of abuse. Tell the group that abuse in any form poisons relationships.*

My Leadership

Ask the group to discuss with partners/in groups the following:

- what is their role in this scenario?
- who should they be thinking about in this scenario?
- who do they have a responsibility to help in this situation?

My Plan

Say - We have discussed the 'scene' and your 'challenges' lets now think what we can do.

Tell the group they have 5 – 10 minutes to discuss in pairs their plan around what they could do in this situation. Ask the group to make sure that they think of any consequences that could occur.

Option 1: Do nothing. It's none of your business.

Ask the group:

1. Is this an option that some might consider using? *We have already identified some of the reasons people might give for not getting involved.*

2. What might happen if you do nothing? *Responses may include: The abuse could escalate or manifest in other abusive behaviours, your friend might feel anxious and scared to live her life her own way, she may become isolated from friends etc.*

3. What does doing nothing say to your friend? *That you don't think there's anything wrong with her boyfriend's behaviour. That you agree he has the 'right' to know her every move.*

4. What does doing nothing say to her boyfriend? *That what he's doing is okay and that this is part of a normal relationship.*

Option 2: Encourage your friend to put her phone away, to take a break while you do something else.

Ask the group:

1. Why might people choose this option? *It's easy and safe.*

2. What might be the benefits of this option? *Take some ideas and suggest that putting her phone away might take her mind off the constant messages and make her feel more relaxed. It might also give you a chance to have a chat with her about what is going on and how she feels about it.*

3. Do you think it's important to ask your friend how she feels about all the messages? Why? *She may not have considered before that there is anything wrong with it, or perhaps she feels unhappy about it but doesn't know what to do.*

Option 3: Tell your friend you're concerned about what's going on and let her know you're there to support her.

Ask the group:

1. What might put someone off choosing this option? *Suggestions: Might not want to interfere, might think she'll be embarrassed or annoyed if you bring it up etc.*

2. Do you think helping your friend is 'interfering' or being a good friend? *Being a good friend.*

Option 4: Tell her boyfriend to back off, or ask one of his friends to talk to him about it.

Ask the group:

1. How easy would this be? *Some people might feel uncomfortable going direct to the boyfriend.*

2. What might be the disadvantage of this? *Take some ideas. Your friend might be annoyed you've gone behind her back.*

3. Why would it be important to speak to the girl first and decide together how to tackle her boyfriend? *It's her relationship and she needs to feel safe. Your loyalty is to her, as her friend. If she feels controlled by her boyfriend, she needs you to help give her some of that control back, by allowing her to decide how to tackle the situation and supporting her to do so.*

Option 5: Share your worries with some mutual friends, and decide what to do together.

Ask the group:

1. What are the benefits of speaking to other friends about what is happening? *You're able to get reassurance that others have noticed / think this is unhealthy too, your friend might be more likely to listen if you can say you've all noticed, it wouldn't just single you out etc.*

2. What might be the challenges to this? *Your friend might think you're all gossiping about her relationship behind her back; she might feel embarrassed or annoyed etc.*

Option 6: Talk about your concerns with a teacher/adult you trust or an MVP mentor, and ask their advice on what to do.

Ask the group:

1. What reasons might people give for not choosing this option? *Suggestions might include: Don't want to be a tell-tale / a 'grass' (remind pupils that helping out in this situation is about being a good friend), don't want to interfere and bring even more people into their relationship when you can just approach directly etc.*

2. Would speaking to a Mentor be another way of telling someone what is happening and getting some support? *Yes.*

Option 7: Personal Option

Ask the group:

1. Is there anything else you could do? *Remember to explore the possible consequences for any additional options.*

Final words

Reinforce key messages

Reinforce key messages from discussion to include:

- Let the group know that as leaders, they have the opportunity to make sure their school and community are supportive, safe and inclusive.
- Sending numerous text messages to a boyfriend/girlfriend could be a sign of a controlling relationship.
- Controlling someone, including always expecting to know where someone is or who they are with, is not part of a healthy relationship.
- It's important we can recognise when a relationship isn't healthy.
- There are a number of options we can choose from to challenge behaviour with which we don't agree.
- We have a responsibility to help our friends and keep ourselves safe.