

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Year groups 5-11

We recommend using this before the Empowering Relationships activity.

"The Sex Education curriculum is evil, and your ideas of a 'healthy relationship' are not healthy to us." – Parent of Faith, Sheffield

"I'm really happy if school can teach my children what is a healthy relationship?" – Parent of Faith, Sheffield

"We should learn about relationships earlier, so we have knowledge prior to going into them" – Student, school in Sheffield

"I think I am probably much more liberal in my ideas compared to other religious parents, so I am pleased that the schools are [teaching about] healthy relationships" – Parent of Faith, Sheffield

Many children are introduced to ideas about 'relationships' through the stories they watch or hear, and later read themselves. These stories present a wide range of relationships, some of which might be seen as healthy, but not all.

This activity is designed to aid your teaching on the topic of 'Healthy Relationships'. Encouraging pupils to think critically about the stories they have been told, it supports them to challenge stereotypes within these narratives by recreating stories in a way that promotes equality, trust and safety within a relationship.

This activity broaches questions that people with different religious backgrounds approach differently, and as such it requires sensitivity if it is to be inclusive. This is because, though some parents and children of faith are comfortable with mainstream understandings of good or healthy relationships, these terms ring alarm bells for some. Thus, without attempting to generalise about how a 'religious person' or a 'typical' Christian, Muslim, Hindu or other person of faith might regard a healthy relationship, this resource helps teachers to navigate the religious sensitivities in the term healthy relationship.

Activity 1: Relationships in classic fairy tales

Classic Disney films for example offer an array of attitudes and behaviours, some of which are idealised, others violent and unhealthy. These stories introduce fundamental ideas about relationships, broaching subjects such as love, courtship, romance, consent, communication and boundaries.

Fairy tales are sometimes thought of as children's stories – perhaps because they have been retold in sanitised forms with some of their violence and danger stripped away – but their themes are relevant to all ages. Still, for classes with older children, this activity can be adapted, swapping these stories for others that may be seen to be grown up, for example the well-known love story of Romeo and Juliet, which ends in tragedy. Some examples of fairy tales are provided at the bottom of this resource.

As a class, watch or read excerpts from classic fairy tales. Here, you could show clips from Disney films such as Brave, Frozen, Encanto and Luca. Then ask the room to discuss:

- What sorts of relationships do these fairy tales and films show?
- What is good about these relationships?
- What is bad about these relationships?
- Do you think this scene shows a healthy or unhealthy relationship? Why?

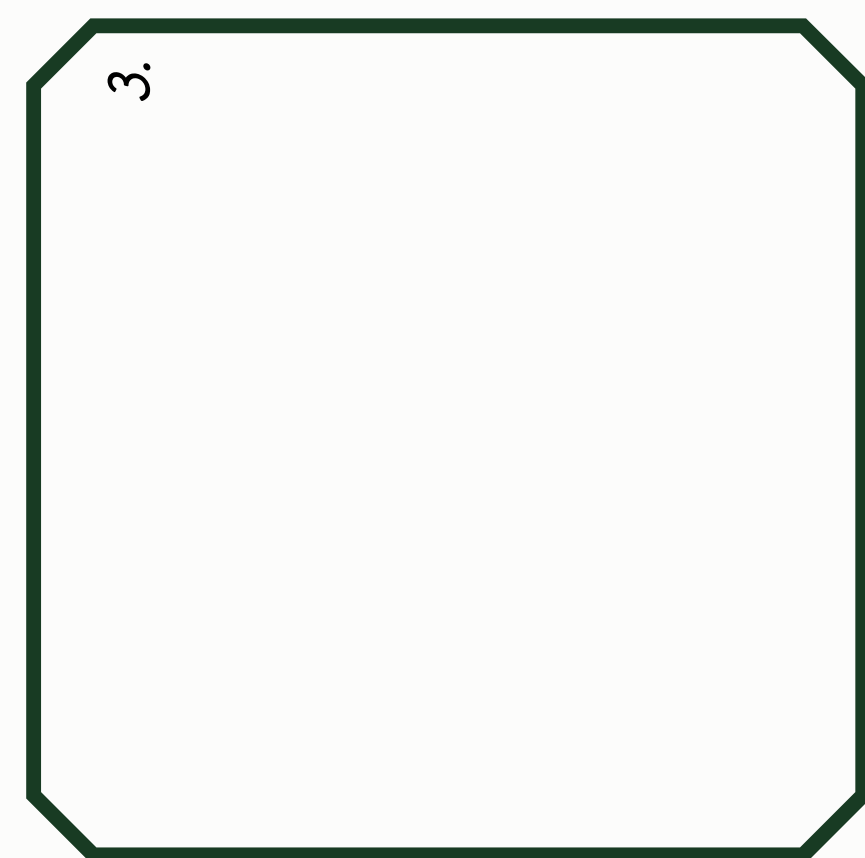
Discussion points

Talk about the features of healthy and unhealthy relationships, for example:

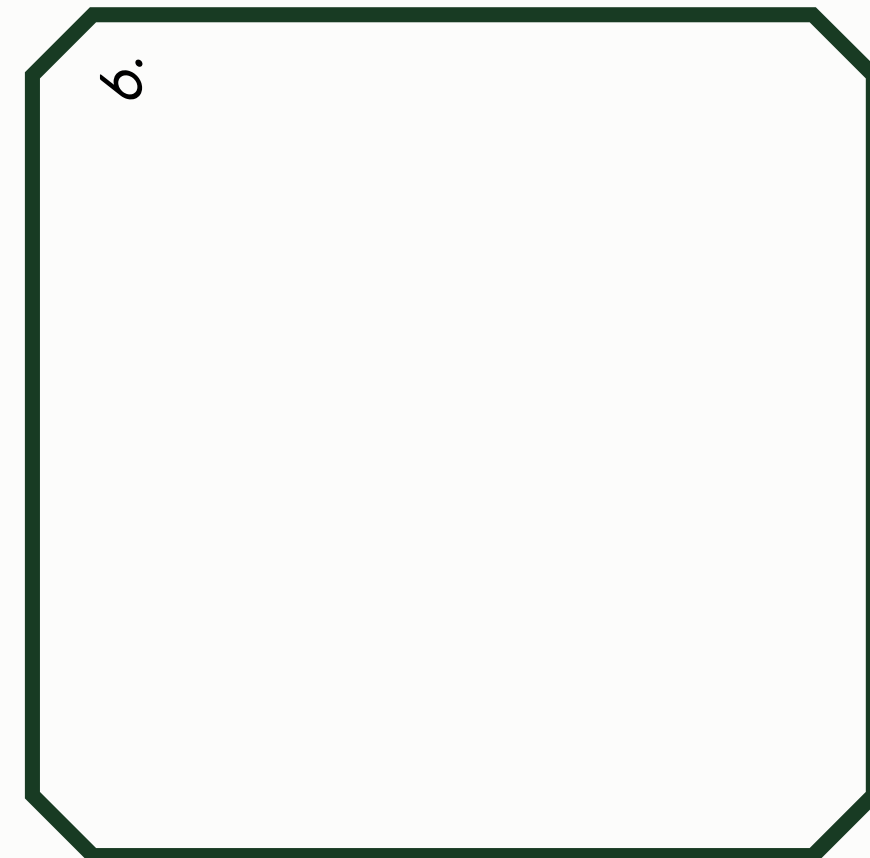
- Healthy relationships can be respecting and listening to one another, gaining consent before physically touching someone else, feeling happy and safe.
- Unhealthy relationships can be showing aggression towards other people, not respecting their decisions, trying to control them, general feelings of unease etc.
- Unhealthy relationships aren't always obvious or explicit; the signs are often hidden and difficult to describe. Any feelings of discomfort and unease in a relationship should be taken seriously.

Activity 2: Retelling fairy tales – with healthier relationships

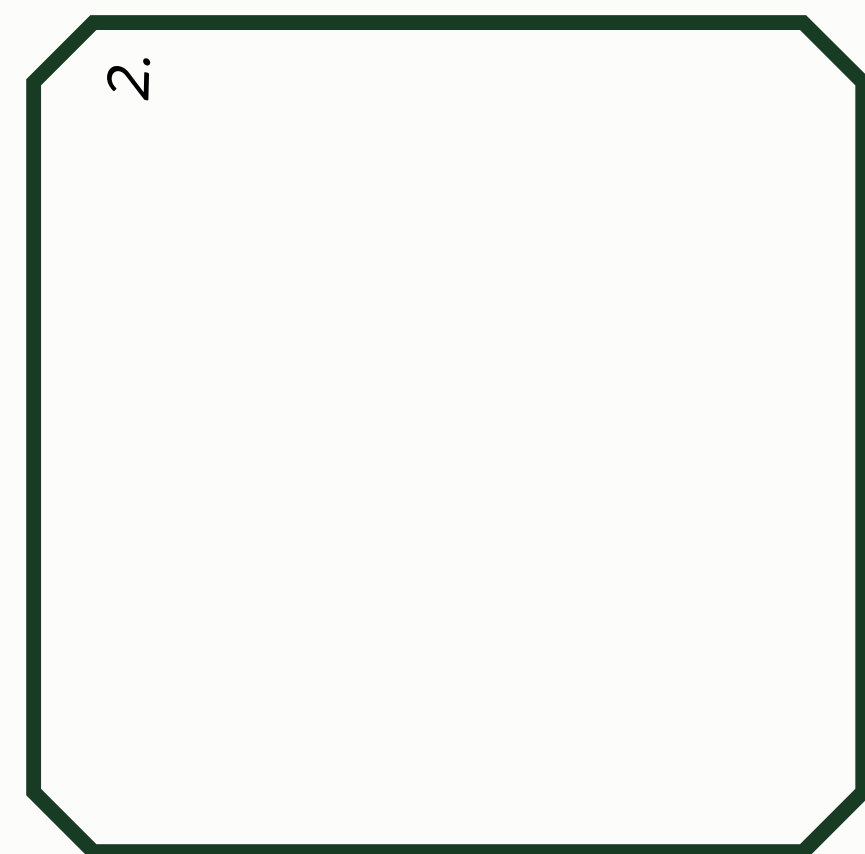
- Splitting the room into small groups, assign a story to each group.
- Using the Storyboard Activity sheet, ask each group to create a new version of their chosen story, which depicts a healthier relationship.
- Ask each group to share their story with the class and say how it shows a healthy relationship.



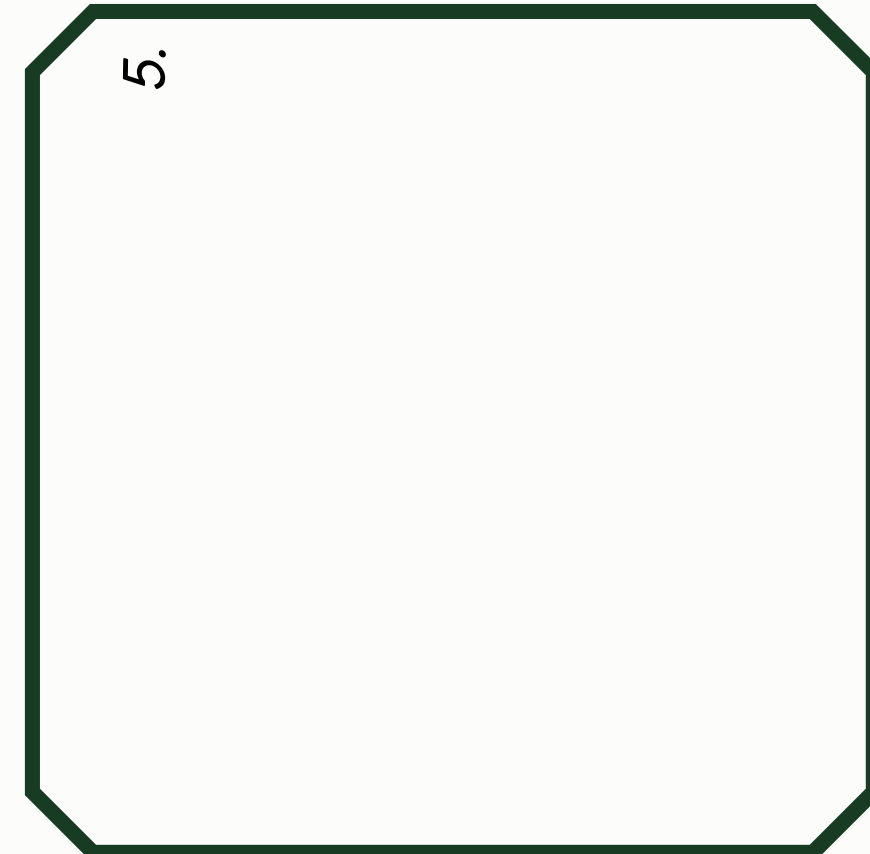
But one day...



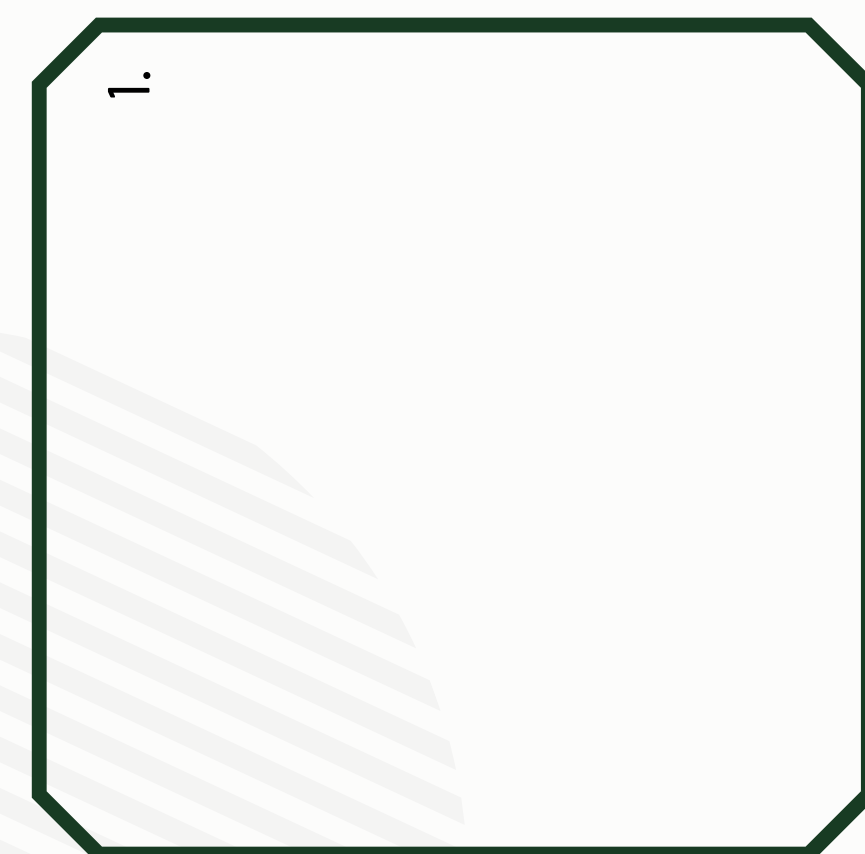
Ever since then...



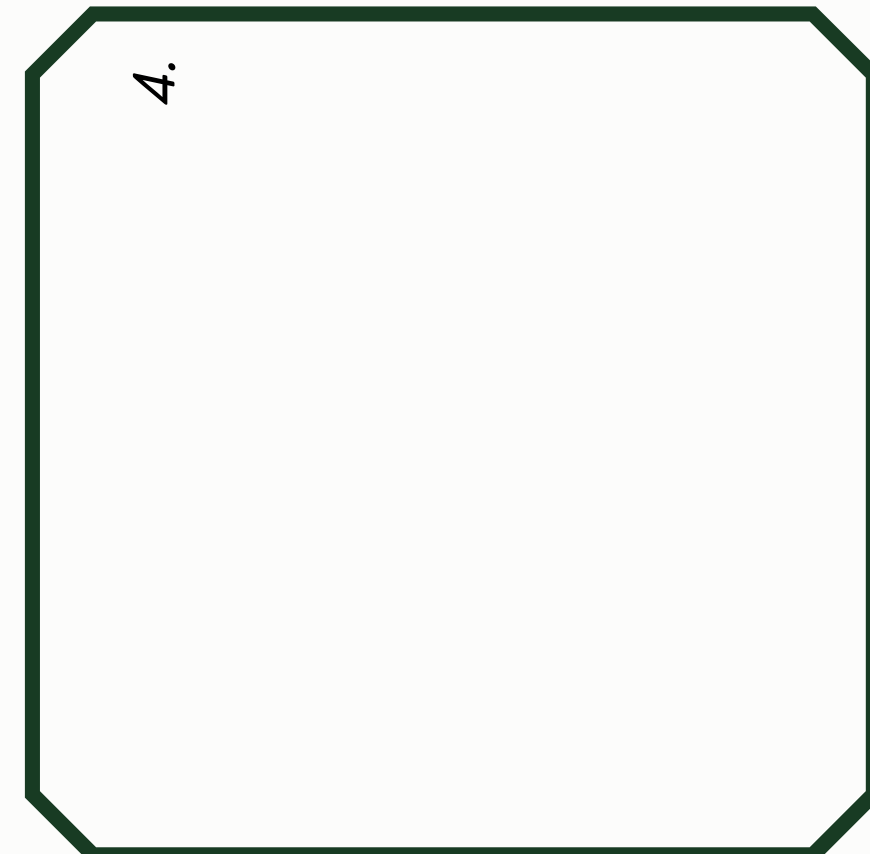
Everyday...



Until then...



Once upon a time...



Because of that...

Teacher's Notes

These exercises may show that children may have different ideas about what makes a relationship healthy or unhealthy. It is helpful to recognise these differences, explaining that people understand healthy relationships in different ways, and discussing some reasons why. Consider how a person's religion, cultural background, family and friends may influence their understandings of a healthy relationship.

Examples of Fairy Tales

Some mainstream examples of fairy tales include the following:

Sleeping Beauty

Theme: Consent

In this scene we see Prince Phillip kiss Princess Aurora while she is asleep without her consent.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbGQJ9xKx3M>

Shrek 2

Theme: Changing yourself for the person you like.

Here we see Shrek going to great lengths (drinking a magic potion) because he wants to change himself from an ogre into a human. He thinks this will be the only way that he will be deserving of Princess Fiona.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvDMLleegbl>

Little Mermaid

Theme: Changing yourself for the person you like

In this clip Ursula convinces Ariel that the only way Prince Eric will fall in love with her is if she turns into a human. She must sacrifice her voice as a result.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOfWYtwvrww>

Beauty and the Beast

Anger and controlling behaviour
When the Beast doesn't get his own way he becomes angry at Belle, tries to manipulate her and ultimately withholds food as a punishment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSzOllWm64I>

In addition to these mainstream films, we encourage teachers to try to find films that show diverse characters, for example with different skin colours and cultural backgrounds. You may need to seek out films relevant to your school and community.