

*April 8, 2026*



## Conversation Strategies for Talking with Youth about Healthy Relationships

Presenters:

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Child Trends

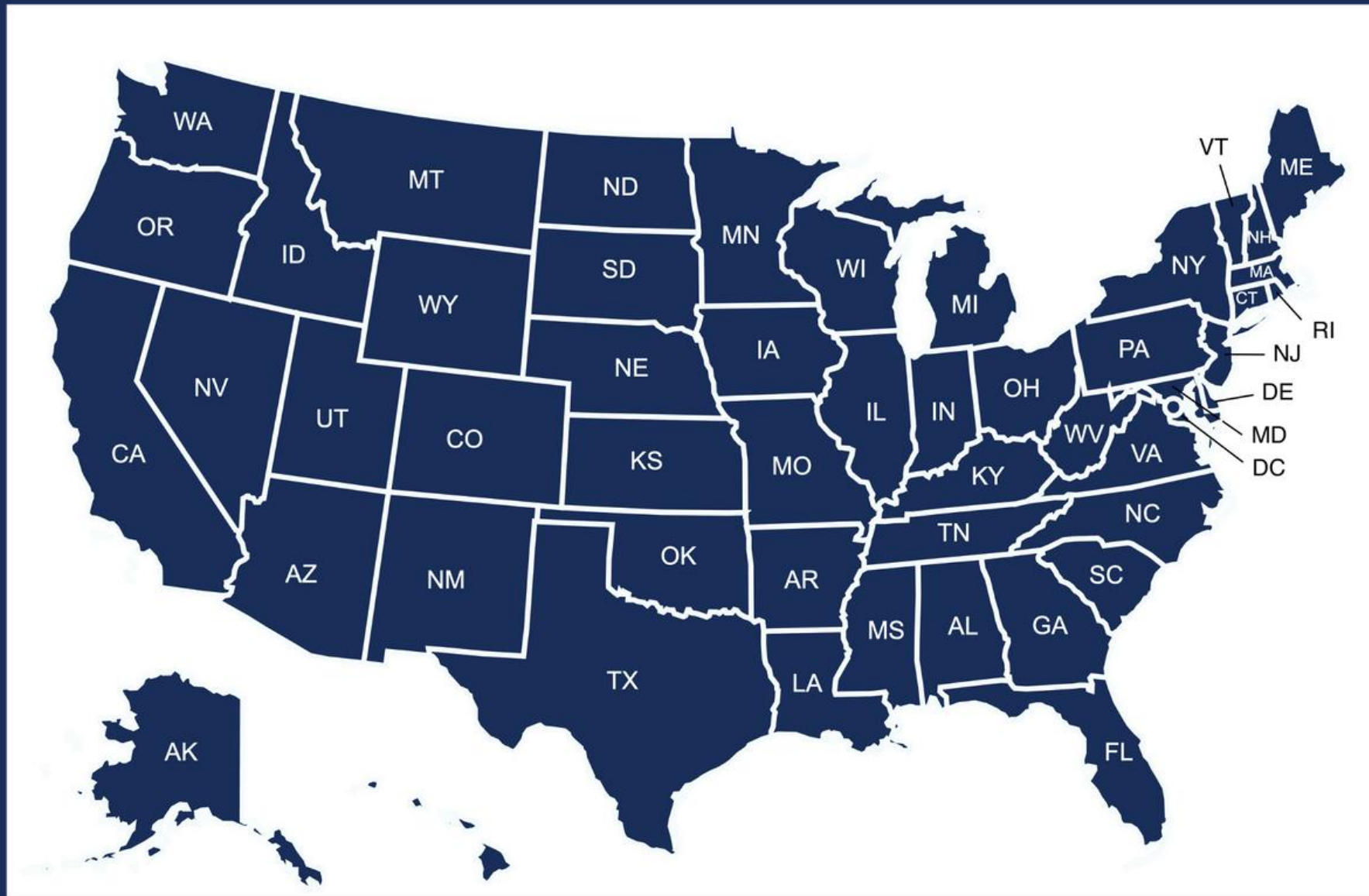
# Webinar Resources

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# Charlie and Helen Dibble



2023-2024 Clients  
served approximately 116,978 youth



The Dibble Institute  
is a national,  
independent non-  
profit organization.

# Our Mission

*Empowering youth and young adults with skills to build and sustain healthy interpersonal and romantic relationships.*



We believe in **research**.



We believe in **stable, safe, and nurturing** families.



We believe that **relationship education** is for **everyone**.





# ACTIVATE

THE CENTER TO BRING ADOLESCENT  
SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RESEARCH  
TO YOUTH-SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS

## Conversation Strategies for Talking with Youth about Healthy Relationships



**Activate** partners with youth-supporting professionals, young people, and researchers to translate research and create research-based resources for professionals who support young people experiencing the justice system, child welfare system, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work (i.e., opportunity youth).



# Learning objectives

1. Describe key elements of healthy adolescent relationships;
2. Use practical conversation strategies to talk with youth about healthy relationships;
3. Help youth safely navigate digital-based relationships.

# Webinar goals

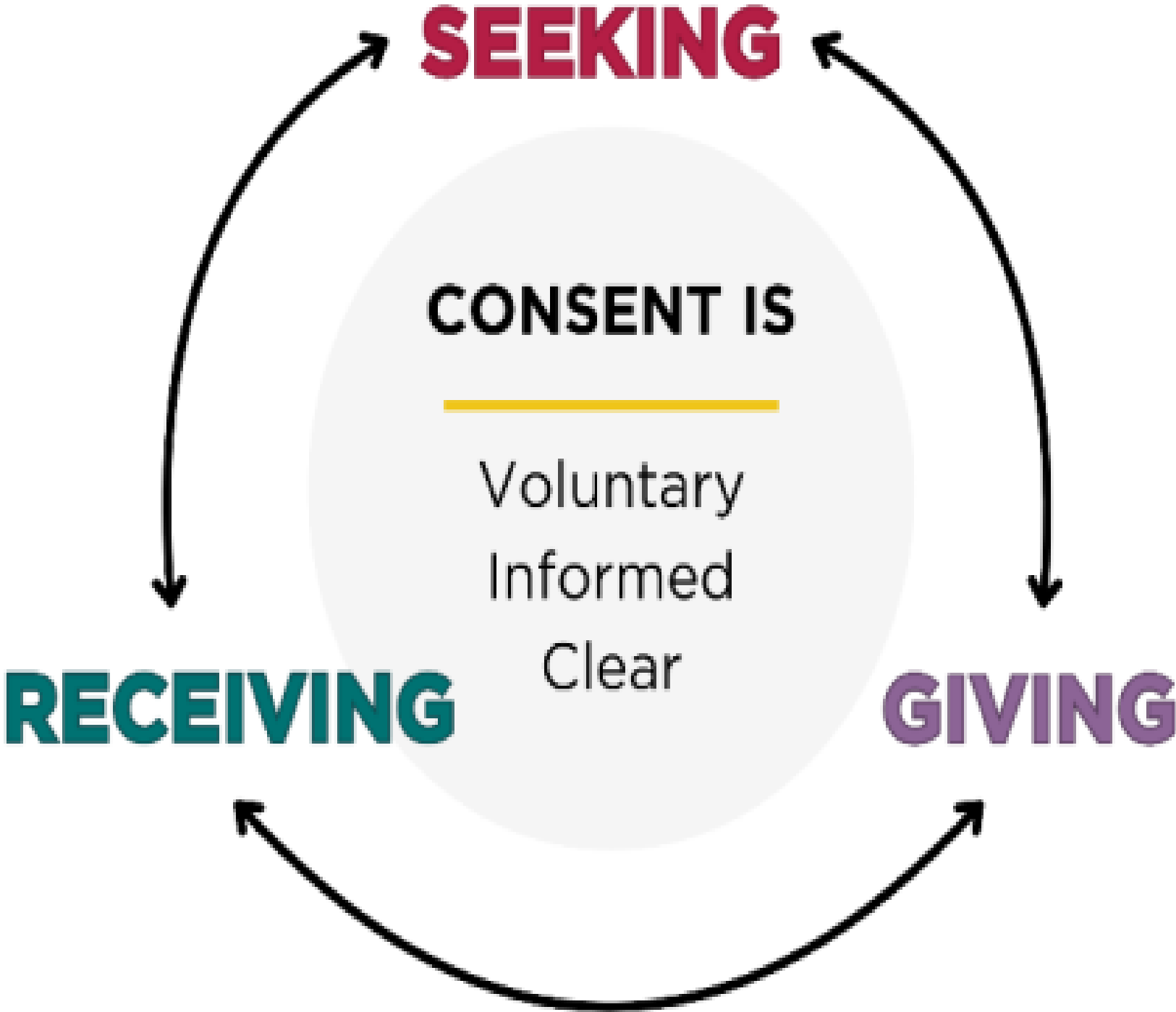
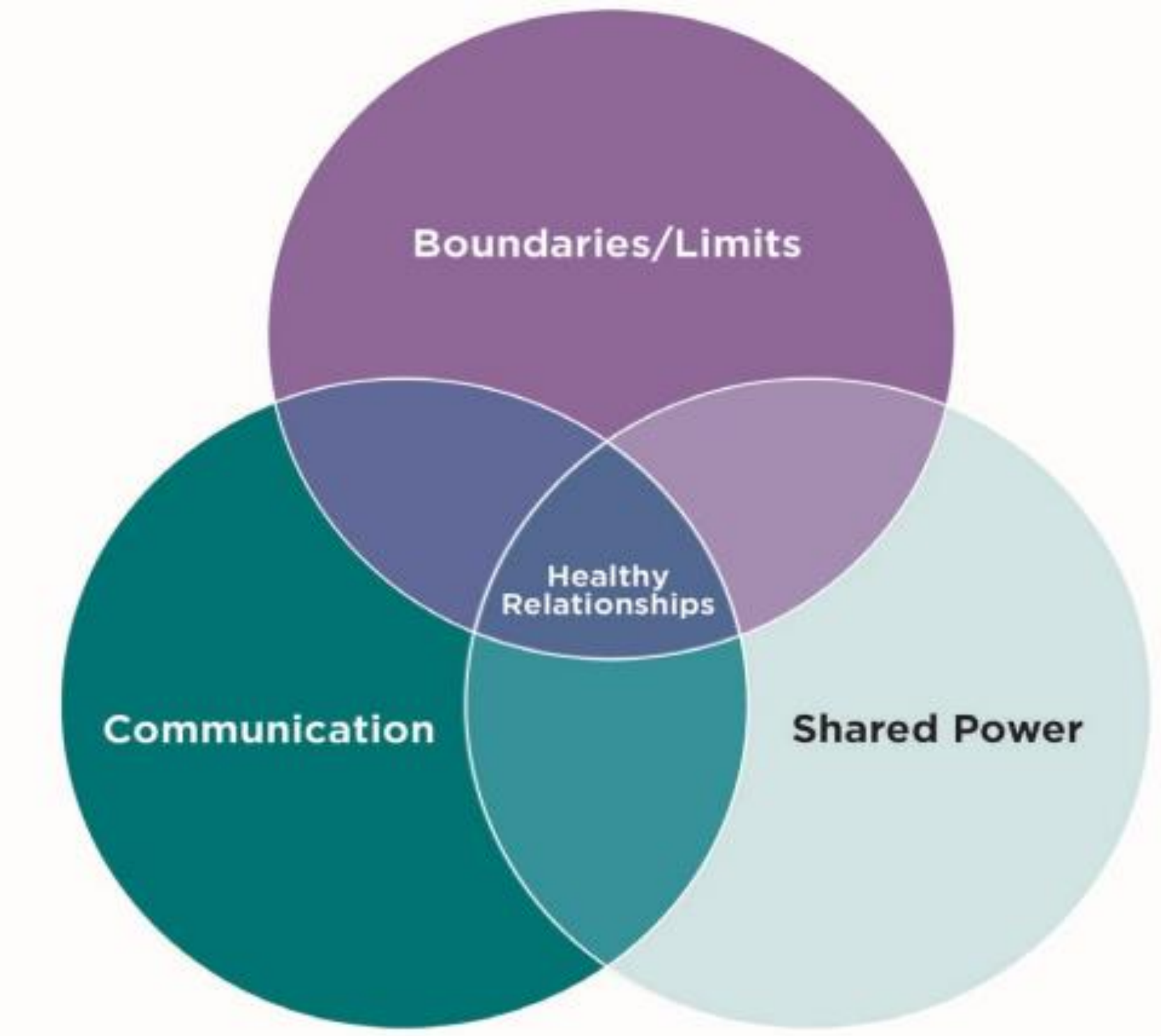
- Introduce four key elements of healthy adolescent relationships
- Share how to apply knowledge about these elements of healthy relationships in your conversations with youth
- Discuss how to navigate aspects of youth relationships in the context of technology



# *We want to learn from you*

In a few words, why is it hard to have conversations about healthy relationships with youth?

# Key elements of healthy relationships





# Healthy Communication – What to Know



# What does healthy communication look like?



## **Active listening (reflect back)**

Listening to understand, not just to respond



## **Clarity (no mind-reading)**

Clearly stating what you mean/your intentions  
Intentionally trying to see another perspective  
Not making assumptions

# What does healthy communication look like?



Emotional regulation

E.g., pause, come back



Repair

E.g., apologize, compromise when needed



Sensitive topics handled with respect




# Healthy Communication – Talking with Youth



## Model healthy communication strategies when talking with youth

- Ask direct questions to understand their relationships
- Avoid making assumptions about their experiences
- Practice active listening using phrases



“What I’m hearing is XYZ. Did I get that right?”

# Use scenarios to help youth understand healthy versus unhealthy communication

- **Example:** *Jordan tells Kate that she should wear a certain dress to prom. Kate wears the dress even though she does not want to because she is not sure how to discuss the issue with Jordan*



# Audience exercise

- Could this be a sign of an unhealthy relationship?
- What additional information do you need to understand the nature of Jordan and Kate's relationship?

Exercise: Draft one question to ask Kate and one conversation prompt Kate could use with Jordan.



# Shared Power– What to Know



# What does shared power look like?

- Decisions made together
- Each person's needs matter
- No one dominates, controls, or “punishes” to get their way





# Shared Power– Talking with Youth



# Listen, reflect, explore



Listen: What happened? How did it make you feel? Did you feel you had a choice?



Reflect: What I am hearing is that you felt pressured? Is that right?



Explore: What would shared power in the decision-making process about Kate's dress have looked like?



# Boundaries – What to Know



# Four types of boundaries



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Physical: touch, affection, sex, personal space

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Emotional: sharing feelings, privacy around past experiences

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Material: money, possessions, phone access

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Mental/intellectual: beliefs, opinions, values



# Boundaries– Talking with Youth



# Strategies for talking with youth about boundaries

- Talk about boundaries in general before talking about boundaries in dating relationships
- Provide opportunities for youth to reflect on their boundaries
  - Ask youth to respond to writing prompts and share what they are comfortable with
- Consider asking youth to reflect through written prompts and share what they are comfortable sharing. For example:
  - “What are 3 things that are deal-breakers for you in a relationship (e.g., pet peeves, or other actions you won’t tolerate)?”
  - “What’s one thing you do not share (e.g., clothes, phone, location)?”

## Audience exercise

What other questions could you ask youth to help them reflect on and talk about their personal boundaries?



# Consent – What to Know



# What is consent?



- Voluntary, informed, enthusiastic agreement
- Ongoing and can change anytime
- Pressure, fear, or impairment cancels consent
- Verbal and nonverbal
  - A combination of both is always best
- The absence of a “no” does not mean “yes”



# Consent–Talking with Youth



# Ways young people communicate consent

Type of Communication	Giving consent to engage in/continue sexual activity	Declining to engage in/continue sexual activity
	(Examples)*	(Examples)*
Verbal Cues Only	<p><b>Providing direct, spoken communication agreeing to an activity<sup>35,36</sup></b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Before:</b> <i>"Yes, I'd love to do that!"<sup>37</sup></i></p> <p><b>During:</b> <i>"I really like this! I'd love to keep going."<sup>38</sup></i></p>	<p><b>Saying clearly and directly that you do not want to do something</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Before:</b> <i>"No, I'd rather not do that."<sup>39</sup></i></p> <p><b>During:</b> <i>"I'm not having fun anymore. I want to stop."<sup>40</sup></i></p>
	<p><b>Displaying actions and/or body language to show you're comfortable, interested, and/or in agreement with the activity<sup>41</sup></b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Before:</b> <i>Excitedly nodding when someone suggests an activity in which you'd like to engage.<sup>42</sup></i></p> <p><b>During:</b> <i>Taking a step closer or holding someone tighter during an interaction such as a hug.<sup>43</sup></i></p>	<p><b>Displaying actions and/or body language to show you're uncomfortable, not interested, and/or not okay with the activity</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Before:</b> <i>Frowning and shaking your head or moving away when someone suggests an activity in which you do not want to engage.</i></p> <p><b>During:</b> <i>Pulling away from an interaction or pushing someone's arms or hands away.<sup>44</sup></i></p>
Verbal and Nonverbal Cues	<p><b>Using words <u>and</u> body language to show agreement</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Before:</b> <i>"Yeah, a hug sounds nice," while opening your arms.<sup>45</sup></i></p> <p><b>During:</b> <i>"This is nice," while leaning into the person you are hugging.<sup>46</sup></i></p>	<p><b>Using words <u>and</u> body language to show refusal</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Before:</b> <i>"No, I don't want a hug," while stepping away.<sup>47</sup></i></p> <p><b>During:</b> <i>"Please let go," while pulling away from a hug.<sup>48</sup></i></p>

Source: Rosenberg, R., Rivas-Koehl, M., Mihalec-Adkins, B., Schlecht, C., Parekh, J., & Rivas-Koehl, D. (2025). [A Practice Guide for Understanding Consent](#). Child Trends.

Note: The examples provided in the table are informed by research included in an accompanying [research synthesis](#).



# Healthy Relationships and Technology – What to Know

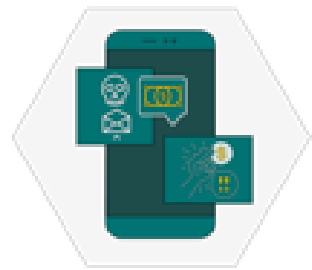


# Technology and relationships - risks and opportunities

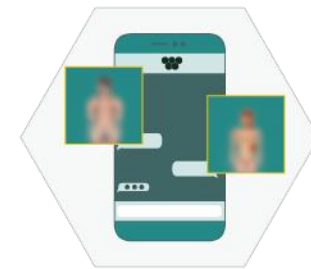
- Technology can facilitate community and connection but can also expose youth to harm
- Things for YSPs to be aware of include:
  - Sexual cyberbullying and digital red flags
  - Misinformation and disinformation

# Sexual cyberbullying: What is it?

**Sexual cyberbullying** is a broad term used to describe any sexually aggressive or coercive behavior facilitated by technology to intentionally harm, embarrass, threaten, or intimidate another person.



**Sextortion:** Receiving or sending a message claiming that an explicit image will be shared online unless one complies with the sender's request



**Revenge porn:** Distributing photographs or videos of an ex-partner, obtained via hacking or other methods.



**Online Sexual Harassment:** Receiving or sending an unsolicited message on Instagram asking about what someone likes/is into sexually



**Cyberstalking:** Receiving/sending messages through a social media platform that one is being watched



**Nonconsensual sexting:** Receiving or sending a naked picture on Snapchat without consent



**Cyberdating abuse:** Finding hurtful comments about one's body on a partner's Instagram post

# Audience exercise

- What about technology and healthy relationships most concerns you and what have you heard most concerns youth?



# Healthy Relationships and Technology – Talking with Youth

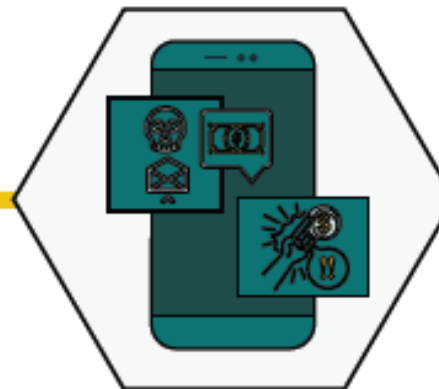


# Sexual cyberbullying behaviors

## WHAT IS THIS BEHAVIOR?

Non-physical way of forcing sexual favors by threatening to reveal evidence of someone's sexual activity.<sup>3</sup>

## SEXTORTION



## WHAT COULD IT LOOK LIKE?

Receiving or sending a message claiming that an explicit image (e.g., a nude) will be shared online unless one complies with the sender's requests.<sup>4</sup>

## ONLINE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Unwanted sexual behavior on any digital platform.<sup>1</sup> This can occur between anyone, including family, friends, acquaintances, or strangers.



Receiving or sending an unsolicited message on Instagram asking about what someone likes/is into sexually.

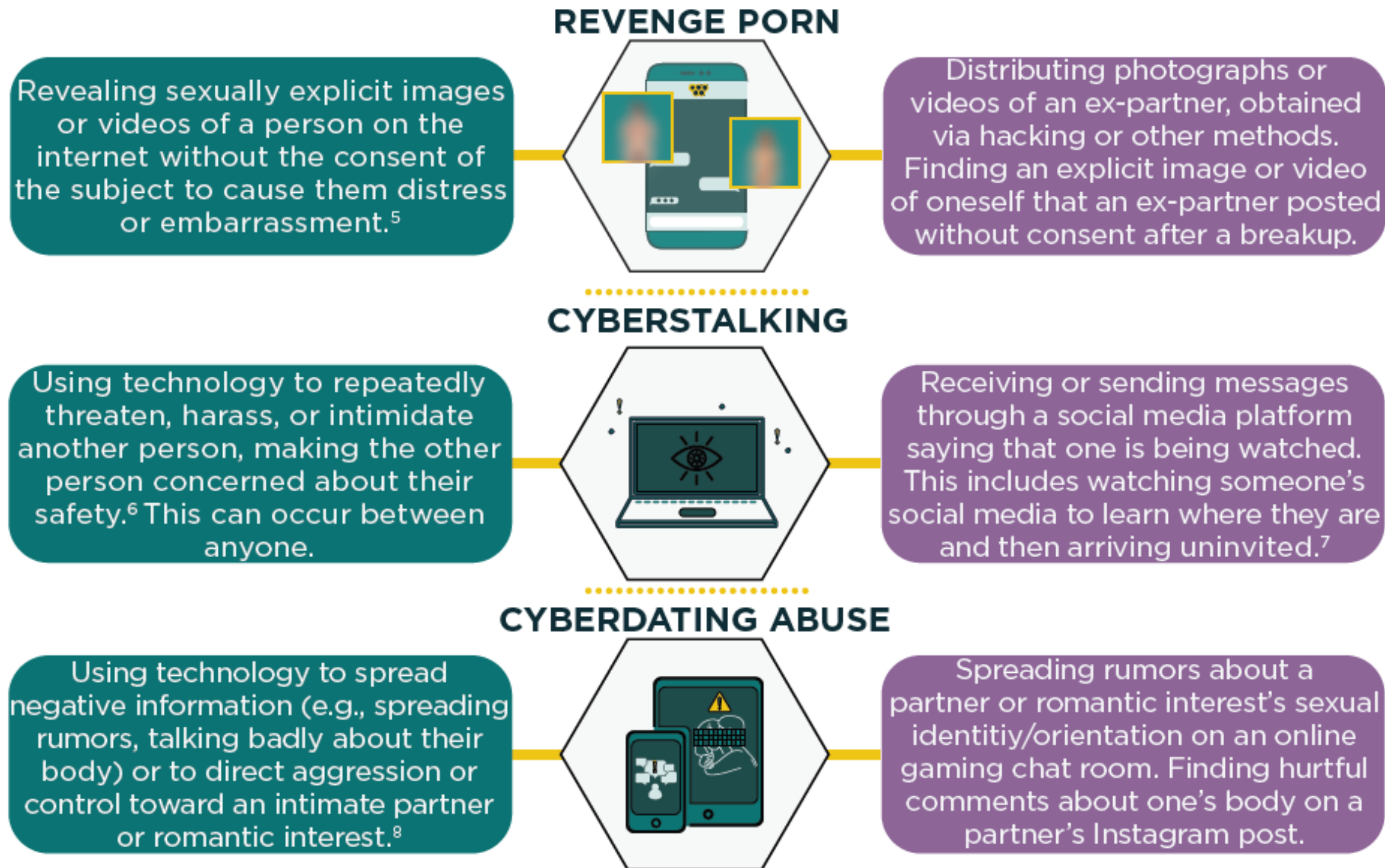
## NONCONSENSUAL SEXTING

Nonconsensual texting of sexually explicit messages or photos.<sup>2</sup> This can occur between anyone, including family, friends, acquaintances, or strangers.



Receiving or sending a naked picture on Snapchat without consent.

# Sexual cyberbullying behaviors



# Helping youth think about healthy relationships in the digital world

- Sample prompts
  - “How does social media work in your relationship?”
  - “How fast is ‘fast enough’ to reply to a message or text?”
  - “What would you do if someone pressured you to send a photo you did not want to?”
- Examples of how youth can communicate digital boundaries to partners
  - “I’m not sharing my password.”
  - “I’m busy. I’ll reply when I can.”
  - “Don’t post me without asking.”
- Improve access to and use of accurate, evidence-informed information



# Final Considerations



# Reminders

Balance between  
guiding youth and  
respecting their  
autonomy

Meet youth where  
they are

You don't need to  
know everything

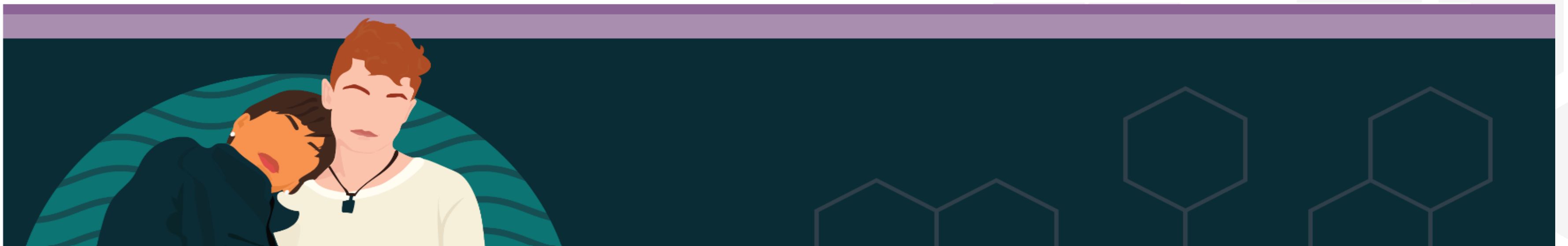


# Related Resources



# Activate Resources

- [Healthy Romantic Relationships and Youth Well-being](#)
- [Crucial Conversations About Healthy Romantic Relationships](#)
- [How to Decode Signs of Sexual Cyberbullying and Support Teens and Youth](#)
- [Sexual Cyberbullying Research Summary](#)
- [A Practice Guide for Understanding Consent](#)





**Questions?**



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# Thank you!

For more information, contact

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This project is supported by the Office of Population Affairs of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$4,584,000 with 100 percent funded by OPA/OASH/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, OPA/OASH/HHS or the U.S. government. For more information, please visit <https://opa.hhs.gov>.

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Need a certificate? [Kim@Dibbleinstitute.org](mailto:Kim@Dibbleinstitute.org)

*Second Wednesday*

*Webinar*  
May 13, 2026



## **The Dating Recession:**

Insights from the 2025 National Dating Landscape Survey

Alan J. Hawkins, PhD

Wheatley Institute at Brigham Young University