

12-2021

College Students Are Often Unaware of How to Maintain a Healthy Romantic Relationship

Giselle Saavedra
California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all

Recommended Citation

Saavedra, Giselle, "College Students Are Often Unaware of How to Maintain a Healthy Romantic Relationship" (2021). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 1173.
https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/1173

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

College students are often unaware of how to maintain a healthy romantic relationships

Giselle Saavedra

Dr. Rob Weisskirch

Capstone Project for the Bachelors of Science in Human Development and Family Studies

Introduction

Many college students are often unaware of how to maintain a healthy romantic relationship. During the young adulthood stage, it is common to see more college students begin to be more involved in serious romantic relationships. Which is why making them aware of how to maintain a healthy relationship is important. To address the issue of college student's not knowing how to maintain a healthy relationship, I have conducted a one-day workshop for the young adults of the California State University Monterey Bay community, to help them increase their knowledge on how to maintain a healthy relationship.

Needs Statement

College students are often a part of the young adulthood stage, during that stage many of them go off to college and begin to make new friendships which can lead them to experience new long term romantic relationships. Yet, for some of these young adults they have never really been taught the effectiveness of communication in a relationship, ways to read red flags in a relationship, and tips on how to maintain a healthy relationship. Oftentimes society will assume that college students are often more interested in one night stands which can be the case in some individuals. Based on a study conducted by the American Psychological Association it was found that between 63% and 83% of college students would rather choose a traditional relationship than a "hook up" (Khazan,2014). With college students beginning new relationships they need skills in which they can learn how to maintain those relationships long term. Which is why often times

In order to maintain a healthy romantic relationship, having good communication with a partner is the foundation to a successful relationship. According to an article by Southern Utah University in (2018) "It can't be said enough: communication is essential in healthy relationships". It allows couples to share their feelings, trust, and manage conflicts that way relationships do not become unhealthy. This allows couples to see early on in their relationships

how their communicating skills are and how they can improve, that way there are no issues throughout their time together.

As college students begin to experience serious long-term romantic relationships, “a red flag is a sign in any relationship that shows something bigger is going on. It can be something bad, a secret being kept or just something to look into” (Gonzalez 2021). Many young adults never really know when something is going wrong in their relationships because they assume they are just comments that are noticeable. For example if a significant other makes a comment constantly about your weight it begins to bring down the person's self-esteem. According to Gonzalez (2021) “Red flags are different for everyone and manifest differently in every relationship, and it can be difficult for some people to be honest with themselves when they arise.” When someone notices red flags they often think it is their fault and that they are the ones in the wrong.

College students often go with the flow when it comes to their relationships, whatever comes natural in the relationships is what keeps it healthy. Oftentimes they tend to just communicate about certain things because they do think their significant others will understand but what helps maintain a good relationship is being open about anything that way they can support or help with any situation or issues going on. They need to understand that there has to be flexibility within the relationship as far as the amount of time they feel the need to see or talk to each other. They need to know that you will not get mad because you did not send a text or call simply because they might have been busy. One has to also understand that a person can still be independent while in a relationship, but now that they can depend on someone else.

Theory

Erik Erikson’s psychosocial development theory, are eight stages that play a big role in a person's psychosocial development. Erikson’s sixth stage is “intimacy and isolation”, the stage

College students are often unaware of how to maintain a healthy romantic relationship

4

that is centered around young adults(19-40) but also those who are creating their first romantic relationships with one another. As stated by McLeod (2018) “During this stage, we begin to share ourselves more intimately with others. We explore relationships leading towards longer term commitments with someone other than a family member”. Meaning that the young adults are beginning to experience happy relationships, feeling safe, and having that additional support.

Yet, McLeod (2018) also mentions that although these relationships should be happy relationships it should be known that when it comes to avoiding the “intimacy” and “fearing of commitment” it can lead to isolation, loneliness, and sometimes a type of mental illness (depression). Erikson states that once individuals have made it past this stage successfully it will allow those individuals to create long lasting relationships. One big factor to consider is that commitment towards one another, will create a bond which could be fun, yet if there is an issue it can lead to a broken relationship.

Consideration of Diversity

The workshop that I have created will take place via zoom to the young adults attending California State University Monterey Bay in Seaside, California. According to College Factual(Student Life, CSUMB Diversity) the university has a population of 63% of females, 37% of men, and non-binary 0%. As for race/ethnicity, 45% are Hispanic, 29% are White, 8% Asian, 4% are African American, 4% are Unknown, 9% are Multi-ethnic, and 2% are Native American or Pacific Islander. I will be conducting my project in English therefore any students who decide to attend the workshop should acknowledge that this presentation is for young adults who are proficient in the English language in order to understand. The workshop is based on material that young adults might have heard about or will find easy to understand for their age which is why I am only targeting young adults ages 19-40.

Learning Outcomes

1. Identify two ways to increase their communication skills, within their relationships.
2. Identify two red flags in a relationship.
3. Name three tips for a healthy relationship.

Method

I created a Powerpoint presentation, where I share with young adults in the CSUMB community via Zoom to discuss and advise on how to communicate with their partner, tips on how to maintain a healthy relationship, and how to read red flags in romantic relationships. (See Appendix B) At the beginning of the presentation I introduced myself, I explained what the workshop was about and what they'd get out of it. As I proceed to ask if they have any questions before beginning, I then begin with an ice breaker in order to get an idea of how many young adults might actually be aware of the topic but also so that we can get everyone comfortable because some participants might feel uncomfortable to talk about their problems. We then continued to move on, and made them aware of the 3 main topics they'd be learning about. See Appendix B.

After, we talked about what red flags were and what they might look like. I decided to show them a video to physically see what red flags look like. I then proceeded with the lesson by introducing (Love Labrinth) from youtube. After the video finished I proceeded by asking the participants a question which they had to submit responses through jamboard. (See Figure 1)

Lastly, I thanked my audience for their time, but also asked them to take the time to work on a jamboard and share what they found most important about each topic or what stood out to them. As well as to take a small survey on the information that was provided to them. See appendix A. I decided to leave five minutes at the end for the jamboard and survey because I

wanted to make sure that the information was in their mind but also because I wanted to get the feedback of every participant I had.

Results

Learning outcome 1 was to identify red flags in unhealthy relationships. In this case the participants had to point out the red flags in a relationship video found on youtube. I believe the participants were able to think back at the video and identify the red flags in the relationship very well. Although the workshop was mainly me speaking, I realized that a lot of participants had a lot to say about the topic and felt comfortable to share with other participants more information. Not only that but the majority of the participants stayed behind even after the workshop to discuss more because they felt that society rarely likes talking about situations that make an unhealthy relationship, causing them to be unaware of when what behaviors they should look for. Two out of seven participants had never been in a relationship which to them was very meaningful because they thought that an unhealthy relationship was mainly more of a physical abuse rather than emotional or mental. "It made me feel more comfortable, thinking of any future relationships I have with anyone, " said Guadalupe.

Learning outcome 2, was more different but it was having participants name two tips in how to maintain a healthy romantic relationship. A lot of the participants participated throughout the workshop which made it more meaningful for those who had never been in relationships. They shared what worked for them and what in the workshop they would like to try in order to maybe fix their relationship a little more. When it came to answering the questions on the jamboard a lot of the participants put the tips we talked about but also added their own that they thought of throughout the presentation.

Learning outcome 3, was on how to develop communication skills and how the effectiveness of communication is good for a romantic relationship. During this section of the workshop I had many questions in regards to “how can one approach their significant other and make them aware that they need to better their communication skills?”. I feel like this outcome was partially successful because it did give them advice on how to better their communication skills and how impactful communication can be to a relationship but it really did not teach one how to communicate the lack of communication issue to their partners. Although it was partially met the participants were able to identify why communication is important and how to develop better communication skills.

Discussion

I believe that this project was semi-successful, based on the work I got back from my audience it looked as if the information that was given was something they'd take back to talk to friends and family about. I could tell my audience was interested in the topic because they were very engaging throughout the presentation. The presentation ran a little longer but I was glad to see there was good communication within the participants. The goal was to make young adults aware of how to maintain a romantic relationship since it is the stage they are currently in. They said that these were techniques they'd use throughout their lifetime and future/current relationships. It also made them reflect on relationships they've seen or have been in. I personally felt that this is something I can continue to share with others, especially with myself, after being in a very unhealthy relationship. Which is why I thought this topic was important for college students my age because my parents never talked to me about what was a good relationship or a bad one therefore I figure if not their parents then me.

If I could do this over again, I would like to have more participants and an in person presentation. I feel like I could have also used examples from family or friends to give different scenarios on what looks unhealthy and possibly how they then managed to make it a healthy romantic relationship. But also get tips from family and friends on how it is that they maintain healthy relationships. I believe that sometimes hearing someone have actually gone through something that relates to the topic makes it more meaningful. Other than that I believe my participants enjoyed my project and the importance of how to maintain a healthy relationship.

References

Alexus Hurtado. (2021). Acknowledging red flags in romantic relationships. University Wire.

Coyne, Stockdale, L., Busby, D., Iverson, B., & Grant, D. M. (2011). "I luv u :)!": A Descriptive Study of the Media Use of Individuals in Romantic Relationships. *Family Relations*, 60(2), 150–162. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2010.00639.x>

Enrollment Fun Facts (Headcounts) for 2021 Fall. Retrieved from

[Enrollment Fun Facts \(Most Recent Term\) Cal State Monterey Bay](#)

Kacerguis, M. A., Adams, G. R. (1980). Erikson stage resolution: The relationship between identity and intimacy. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 9 (2). 117-126.

Khazan, O. (2014, July 2). Why college students need a class in dating. *The Atlantic*.

Retrieved from

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/07/why-todays-college-students-need-a-class-on-dating/373823/>

Weissbourd, R., Peterson, A., & Weinstein, E. (2013). Preparing students for romantic relationships. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(4), 54–58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23611837>

10 tips for healthy relationships in college. SUU. (2018, August 8). Retrieved from November 27, 2021, from <https://www.suu.edu/blog/2018/08/ten-tips-for-healthy-relationships.html>.

Appendix A



**College students are often unaware of how
to maintain a healthy romantic relationship**

By Giselle Saavedra

**Need
Statement**

- **College students might not know their relationship is unhealthy and think it is normal to have unacceptable behaviors.**
- **Young couples are often involved in abusive and traumatic relationships because they have not experienced a healthy relationship before.**
- **Being able to know when something is not right**

Theory

- Erik Erikson's 8 stages of psychosocial development
 - Stage 6- Intimacy and Isolation
 - It is the stage when life is centered on forming intimacy and loving relationships with one another
 - Ages 19-40



3

Learning Outcomes

1. Identify the effectiveness of communication is good for a romantic relationship.
2. Identify two red flags in a relationship.
3. Identify three tips for a healthy relationship.



Participants

- My participants were members of the CSUMB community, who range from ages 18-25.
- 7 women and 3 men
- Average ages of participants: 19(4), 21(3), 23(3)



5

Methods

- Presented a one day workshop via Zoom
- Introduced the 3 topics, then proceeded to begin with an ice breaker, made sure everyone was comfortable.
- Talked about tips that help maintain a good relationship, ways to increase communication skills with SO
- Talked about what are red flags and how they look (showed a clip)
- Concluded and asked everyone to take some time to share with me what they learned on a jamboard.

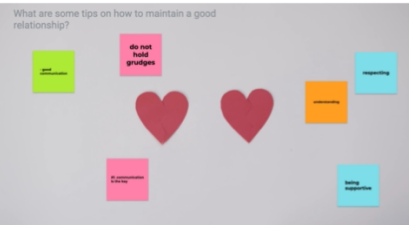
Methods

- Talked about what are red flags and how they look (showed a clip)
- Concluded and asked everyone to take some time to share with me what they learned on a jamboard.



7

Methods



Results

Learning outcome 1: Identify two ways communication skills are effective in relationships

- Met
- Two most common

(seek professional help and let each other express themselves)

Learning Outcome 2: Identify two red flags in a relationship

- Met
- Two most common

(yelling and man's behavior(violent))

Learning Outcome 3: Tips on how to maintain a healthy relationship:

- Met
- Two most common

(understanding and respecting)

9

Discussion

What went good:

- It was successful
- Audience found the topic interesting
- I was able to help young adults and make them aware.

What I'd change:

- In person
- Bigger audience
- Be more interactive during presentation





Appendix B

How to maintain a healthy romantic relationship in the young adult stage

By Giselle Saavedra

Ice Breaker

- Name
 - Age
 - Are you in a relationship, if so for how long?
 - Based on the title, what are you looking forward to?
-



What you will learn

- Effectiveness of communication with a partner
 - How to read red flags in a relationship
 - Tips on how to have a healthy romantic relationship
-

Red Flags

- Red flags
 - Stalking, controlling, mental abuse, physical abuse, you fearing for your life around your partner.
 - Watch this video and keep in mind what might be considered red flags.
-



Tips on how to keep a healthy relationship



- Keep expectations realistic
 - Understand
 - Communicate
 - Make sure you are taken care of before trying to take care of your partner
 - Be flexible but also dependable
-



How your communication skills are effective in your relationship

- Share feelings
 - Communicating issues
 - Communicate expectations
 - Trust and reassurance
 - Helps build stronger partnerships
-

Now, take some time to

- Reflect on our presentation and what we discussed as a group
 - Take some time to answer the questions on jamboard based on what we learned today
 - [Jamboard](#)
-

**Thank you
Any questions?**

Giselle Saavedra