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Discussion Questions for “Love the Way You Lie”

Media today can expose us to problematic and confusing messages about our world. As caring adults in the lives of young people, we need to pick up where the media leaves off and engage youth in productive dialogues about those messages. The following is a list of activities and questions that can be used to facilitate conversations with young people about the song and video “Love the Way You Lie” by Eminem, featuring Rihanna. Day One created these questions so that this popular song can be used as an entry point to talk about abusive, as well as healthy, relationships.

The concepts and themes presented in “Love the Way You Lie” are complex and there are many more opportunities for exploration and dialogue than we offer here. We hope this tool offers a useful starting place. We encourage you to create questions that may be more specific to your own community needs. Please contact us if you have questions or would like more resources. We’d love to hear how your conversations go!

In Solidarity,
Day One Staff

Discussion Questions for “Love the Way You Lie”

Materials:

- Copies of the song lyrics
- Access to the video (If this is not possible, use the lyrics, or you may be able to capture and print images from the video)
- Chart paper/ whiteboard
- Markers
- Blank paper for youth to write on

Getting Started:

- Talk with your group about what the session will look like and what you’d like to get out of the discussion.
- We suggest setting some guidelines for the space that everyone can agree to. These can include:
 - Confidentiality (What’s said here stays here)
 - One Mic, One Diva (One person speaks at a time)
 - Respect
 - No Judgment
 - Step up, Step back (Challenge yourself to speak up if you’re often quiet, or to not speak as much so others have the chance to speak)
- Read the lyrics to the song aloud as a group.
- Watch the video. It can be found at the following IP address:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uelHwf8o7_U

Activity 1- Reflection and Discussion

Reflection:

1. Pass out paper and pens to the young people before watching the video and tell them that, if they choose to, they can take notes on what they see. For example, they can take notes on things that surprise them, things they like or don't like. Let them know that you will discuss the video afterwards and that they may use their notes for reference.
2. Right after watching the video or listening to the song, give the youth 5 minutes to write freely and express themselves on paper. They can use the time however they want: to write down what the song made them think about or how they feel, to draw, etc. Let them know that this is a personal exercise and that they will not have to share unless they wish to.
3. Once the 5 minutes are up, ask if anyone would like to share what they wrote/drew.
4. After everyone who wants to has had a chance to share, use the questions below to facilitate a discussion.

Questions for Group Discussion:

Tips for facilitation - If you'd like, you can write the questions out on chart paper or a whiteboard to help organize your notes. Be sure to document every answer you get from your participants. This validates student voices as well as provides a very clear representation of what has been said in the space. If you need to go back to something at a later time you will have a good reminder.

1. Ask youth:
 - a) *What did you see?*
 - b) *How did it make you feel?*
 - c) *What message(s) did you get from this video?*
2. Tell youth: *"Abuse can often occur in cycles. The video offers a clear example of this. In the opening scenes we see the couple asleep together, and at the end we see a similar scene. What happens in between? What does the similar beginning and end communicate?"*
 - a) Work with youth to identify what happened first (anger, fight), what happened next (make-up, forgiveness) what happened after that (more violence), and then (gifts and love), etc.
 - b) Document all of these in a circle to demonstrate a cycle of violence (see appendix A).

Activity 2 - Jealousy Does Not Equal Love:

1. Ask youth: *“What emotions did you see displayed in this video?”*
 - a) Make a list with all their answers - Make sure that Jealousy and Love are on the list
2. Explain: *“We often get messages that love and jealousy are the same thing. But let’s break this down to better understand it.”*
3. Ask your group, *“What do you feel when you are jealous?”* – Draw the diagram below and ask youth to brainstorm some answers and list these under “Jealousy”

Draw on the board:

Jealousy =  ?

Some common responses →

Mad
Angry
Control
Possessive
Depressed
Violent
Wanting attention
Insecure
*Don't trust partner
*Vengeance

(Starred responses may require a suggestion from the facilitator.)

4. After you've finished brainstorming – ask the students: *“Look at this list. Would you have come up with the same things if I asked you to make a list of what you want love to be?”* Most will say no.
5. Then tell students: *“Let's make that list. Although love is not perfect and has its challenges, ideally, what do you want love to be?”* Collect their answers under the side of the diagram that says love.
6. Ask students: *“Looking at these two lists, are jealousy and love equal? No.”*

7. Explain: *“Jealousy is a completely normal feeling. We all feel it. Raise your hand if you have ever felt jealous about anything. This emotion happens to all of us. The point of this exercise isn’t to tell you NOT to feel jealous; it’s to let you know that jealousy **doesn’t** mean that someone loves you.”*
8. Ask: *“Is jealousy about how you feel about someone else or how you feel about yourself?”*
Usually young people will identify that jealousy is about what is going on inside of you and stems from insecurity or a lack of trust, not necessarily from love. Remind them that this is important because extreme jealousy can be one of the biggest warning signs of an abusive relationship.
9. If there’s time, have participants brainstorm what extreme jealousy looks like.
10. Overall message for this activity: Jealousy is normal, but it is *not* a sign of love. Extreme jealousy can be a warning sign of an abusive relationship.

Activity 3 – What are Healthy Relationships?

1. Ask youth: *“What is the ending of the story in the video? What is the ending of the story in the lyrics? How are they different and why do you think they are different?”*
2. Ask: *“What are possible endings to this story that were not included?”*
 - a. Brainstorm a list on chart paper. Some examples:
 - i. Asking for help
 - ii. Ending the relationship
 - iii. Taking a break from the relationship for each individual to get help/support and check in with each other at a later date
3. Tell youth: *“This video is highlighting what an unhealthy relationship looks like. Let’s talk about what a **healthy** relationship is...”*
 - a. Brainstorm a list on the board answering the questions: *“What do you want your relationship to look like?”* or *“What does a healthy relationship consist of?”*, AND *“What does an unhealthy relationship consist of?”* Or *“What are things you **don’t** want in a relationship?”*
 - b. Compare the lists under unhealthy and healthy relationships to highlight the differences.

Other Questions/Topics for Discussion:

If you choose, you can discuss the following questions with your group:

1. What is the role of alcohol in this relationship? Is it used as an excuse for the violence?
2. What are the differences between the song lyrics and the images in the video?
 - a. The facilitator can highlight that the lyrics clearly show one person controlling the other, whereas the video shows more mutual violence.
3. How is the imagery of fire used in the video?
 - a. What can fire symbolize? Why do you think the image of fire is used in the video? What does it stand for?
 - i. Have youth explore whether the imagery of fire is used to show that this relationship is in fact harmful or “hot”/desirable. Why would it be one or the other?
4. If the youth are of a mature age, ask about the sexualized violence in the video. Point out the scene where the female character is pushed into the wall and then the two start kissing.
 - a. How do you feel about these two interactions being placed so closely together in the video?
 - b. Where else in the media do we get the message that being violent is attractive or sexy?
5. What do you think Eminem’s intention was in creating this song and video? What do you think Rihanna’s intention was in choosing to collaborate in this song and video?
6. What does the media tell us are characteristics of healthy/unhealthy relationships? How does this influence what we think of as healthy/unhealthy relationships?
7. How does Eminem’s history as someone accused of perpetrating violence on his partner, and Rihanna’s experience as a survivor of domestic violence, affect how we receive the lyrics and video?

Facts/Statistics:

1. Abuse can happen to anyone regardless of class, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender and sexual orientation.
2. 1 in 10 teenagers in New York City schools reports experiencing physical or sexual violence in a dating relationship *within the past year*.¹
3. 1 in 3 teens report experiencing some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships, including verbal and emotional abuse.²
4. A high prevalence of dating relationships of young women between 15 and 24 in New York City are characterized by physical violence (22%), coercion (67%) and forced sexual experiences (37%).³
5. The New York City Domestic Violence Hotline receives an average of 1,400 calls from teenagers every month.⁴
6. Nearly half of all female homicide victims in New York City are killed in intimate partner homicides. Of these intimate partner homicides, teenagers comprise approximately 8% of the total victims.⁵
7. About 10% of domestic violence victims seen in the City's public hospitals are under 20 years old.⁶
8. As many as half of LGBTQ relationships may be abusive—making abuse in same-sex relationships just as widespread as in heterosexual relationships.⁷

¹ New York City Department of Health, Teen Health Risk Survey, 2007.

² Carolyn Tucker Halpern, Ph.D. et al., "Partner Violence Among Adolescents in Opposite-Sex Romantic Relationships: Findings From the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health." *American Journal of Public Health* 91 (2001) 1680.

³ Davidson LL. Prevalence of intimate partner violence in urban young women: Experiences with disclosure in health care settings. Washington, DC: APHA presentation; 2004.

⁴ Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence Fact Sheet*, May 2006.

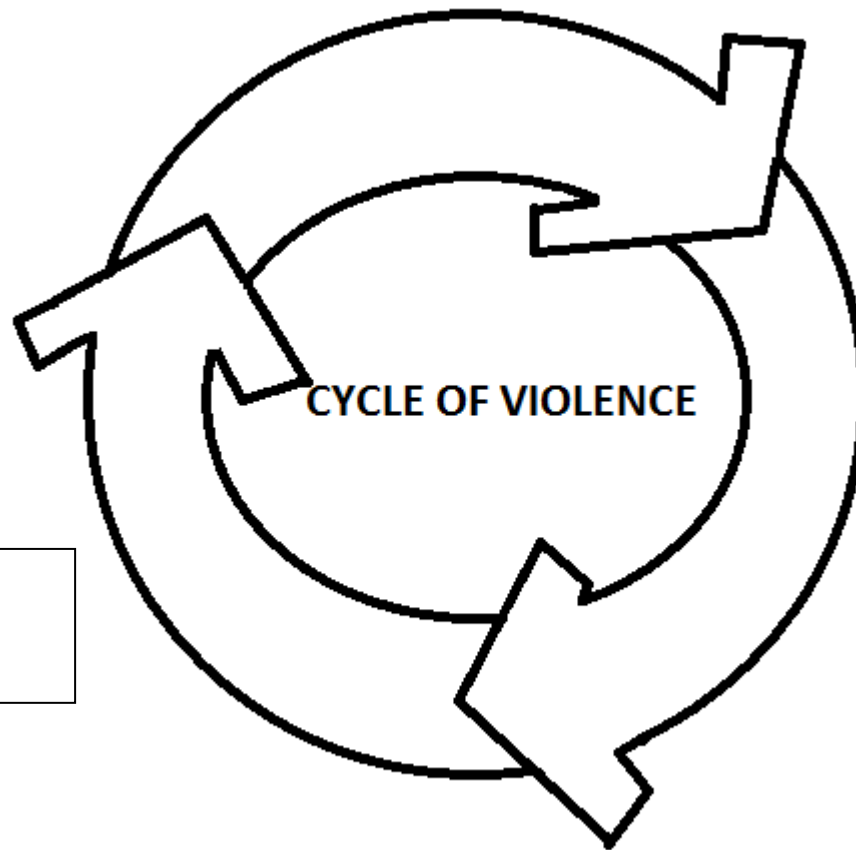
⁵ Wilt, Susan, Susan Illman and Maia Brodyfield, *Female Homicide Victims in New York City, 1990-1994*, New York City Department of Health, 1996.

⁶ Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence Fact Sheet*, November 2005

⁷ National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Domestic Violence in 2001." 2001.

Appendix A:

Phase 1: **Tension Building**
Anger, blaming and arguing occur



Phase 2: **Eruption**
Violence- hitting, slapping, shoving, kicking, etc.

Phase 3: **Honeymoon stage**
Saying sorry, promises it will never happen again, gifts