

Healthy Relationships Transcript

>> [Constantine Cabarios:] So, you have joined the healthy relationships workshop and I said earlier my name is Constantine and I'm one of the counsellors here at George Brown. So, I'm a registered social worker and oftentimes we talk about relationships. And today what we're going to do is go over the different kinds of relationships that students go through within a year or during their program and how it affects their ability to focus on their schooling. Because oftentimes personal relationships and professional relationships come into play when we're trying to focus on our main goal which is to finish our studies.

What we'll cover

So, we're going to cover the different kinds of relationships as I said from professional to personal. We're going to go over quickly what communication styles may affect our relationship and how to understand each other. And again, because I'm a counselling we're going to talk about emotions and how that affects our relationships. And then we're going to go talk about how our different perspectives, and our boundaries and how a conflict may arise because of our different perspectives on each other and also how we maintain boundaries to protect ourselves. This thing about yes and no making decisions that's something I had picked up from another workshop that I did. It's when we understand how our emotions work and then we make a decision based on either emotion or fact. That's what we're going to go through. And then after that we're going to talk about just being you. Because sometimes we forget who we are and so it's what's going to drive us during the school year. Whether you're going to have relationships in person or online it's important to be authentic, okay. So, as the description had said, this workshop will discuss different kinds of relationships whether it's romantic or sexual, professional or personal, with your family or friends, etcetera and how it may impact you as a student and your wellbeing, okay, especially now during the second lockdown. And if you're living in tight quarters again the frustration with having virtual relationships. We can talk about that in the Q and A and as I said earlier we're going to explore boundaries and how we communicate with each other and how we're going to deal with conflict. It can challenge your existing healthy relationships and it can move into something that you didn't want to move into, so we can do that in the Q and A. And if any other questions that come up just use the chat feature and I'll go through it afterwards, okay.

Relationships

So, here we are. The Webster Dictionary says that relationships is the relation that connects or binds persons. A kinship and that means the people that are close to you and the state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealings. So, the state of affairs is whether they are personal or professional. And the other description is whether they're romantic and we'll go over that and what a passionate attachment means. And as I said earlier, what formal or informal means and as you can see here,

this is you and it's like a Venn diagram right. At some point these circles will kind of converge and that's when conflict arises when we don't know what these relationships are now and have been because they've started becoming bigger. And so, for example if your partner here was outside or it starts becoming bigger and starts moving into, you know, I know students date, so sometimes they become partner and classmate at the same time. Sometimes friends become part of your family network, so we can talk about that later on. But basically, kinship is the people you are close to and typically it's, you know, your family, okay. You share common ancestry, culturally, okay, regionally, it's the most familiar to you. Family is your biological or self-defined. Your friends will depend on your level of closeness to them. You intimate partner, again, it could be emotional intimacy or sexual intimacy, you get to define that and that's why it becomes very confusing sometimes. And then acquaintances they could be your neighbours. You know, they could be the shop clerk. It could be classmates too or it could be, you know, the janitor at school. Okay so, but then because you see them a lot sometimes the boundaries blur, okay, because you share things with each other. With coworkers and classmates, again, because you're in the trenches together you will develop emotions, sometimes very intimate sexual or psychological relationships with them during school time, okay. That's why as I said earlier, boundaries are important to know and to understand what your limits are, okay. Limits doesn't, let's say a funny word, let's say boundaries. It's what your threshold is for allowing certain things to happen, how's that. And we can talk about it in the Q and A what boundaries mean to you, okay. So, in a sense that's what relationships look like in a nutshell.

Relationships - continued

Okay, so, this is how as I was saying earlier at some point the circles become larger or they start moving into different realms. And again, this is you, the circles represent how large of a circle these bubbles are in relation to you. And as you can see it starts becoming crowded, okay, while you are managing your time in school. That's a lot to handle inside your head and also inside your heart. There's only limited space for you. And sometimes we don't know how much we're giving to these bubbles, okay. School is in there somewhere and we have to make room for all of these people in our lives and that often takes a lot of energy. So, when you don't focus in school it's because you're focussing on these other bubbles in your life, okay. And as you can see in this Venn diagram it's how we are connected, and these bubbles can become small and large throughout your duration in school and then even afterward because you pick up these relationships. Like for example classmates they either become your friend or your partner and at some point, I think if you're an international student here, these classmates become part of your family system, okay. And some international students have cousins or relatives here and they don't become like the primary family system, it's their friends and classmates that perhaps become their family system. So, this here I was just describing here how we are connected and it's important to know what your professional relationship is and typically this would be your professors and also your faculty support system at George Brown for example myself a counsellor. But because we see each other or work together, sometimes when we're too tired we forget that these are professional people that we're dealing with. And some professors are really nice, and they seem to understand us a lot and that's when sometimes the boundaries

may blur. You know some professors may joke around a lot and we think oh they really get me, you know, but that's their personality showing right. And so, we connect with them like that. So, as I said and then there's some students that maybe we develop romantic feelings for if we're in residents. Sometimes we're putting groups together and then we share things as we're trying to do our assignments together and we realize wow I'm attracted to that person or we share similar interest or cultural similarities and let's hang out. So, this is normal, okay, this is normal. And then again as I said we start to develop the sense of family or kinship with these people that we hang around with. Because again as students sometimes we're away from our biological families. So, it's normal to develop these relationships because we need to feel connected, that's how we are wired. Now platonic, you've heard of this before, that simply means that we are not intimate with this person, okay, it's strictly just like we don't know any personal information about this person, we just say hi and bye and that's the extent of it, okay. So, the context of that is, as I said, and described this professional would be like your work, or school or neighbour. Romantic or sexual or intimate would be like your potential partner or partners depending on what kind of relationship you want to have. And familial is whoever you feel close to and platonic, again, this is kind of blurred, it's either a friendship which is nonsexual but then again because you get to define what kind of relationship it is, some friendships move into very intimate relationships, okay. What was I saying here, yeah, so as I said boundaries are important. So, this is you in the middle. You always should maintain some kind of boundary here and we should always be aware when some of these circles start moving into our own circle. Sometimes we don't know because we're so tired, right. And I'll give you an example. Texting, sure I'll be here for you and then the next thing you know they're texting you 24/7, okay. What else, your boss at work will say hey Constantine can you come work. I understand you need a lot of money, so can you work like three days this week. Even though they know you're in school they still are going to ask you to come work for them. Even though you said I can only work one day a week, okay. Your partner, why are you spending so much time in school. Can't you drive me to blah, blah, blah, like that, okay. And then, of course, family, yeah I get it and I get it you're in school but, you know, family is more important than anything else, so drive me here, drive me there. Call me, here call Rogers Cable for me because I can't do it. So, these are the things that I am relaying to you because I've heard it when they come to counselling, okay. Oh, and classmates when you're doing group assignments and you probably experienced this where you feel you're the one doing the bulk of the job of the assignment because you want to get a good grade. And then they recognize that you're very good at what you do so now they are leaning on you to do more perhaps or cover for them. So, I'm not sure if that happens to you but I've heard it okay. I hope that makes sense as far as how we're connected and what context.

Communication

Now this thing here about communication is very important and again I'm just going to read this. Communication is defined as giving, providing, exchanging of news or information, so that's very platonic right, very general. Then it goes into processing or passing of information and understanding from one person to another. So, this involves kind of like a deeper interaction with another person. And then it moves into process of

transmitting and sharing of ideas, opinions, facts and I highlighted values here, we'll talk about that later, from one person to another or an organization to another. Now, you are in school and if you are trying to communicate to your fellow student what you would like in the assignment, you have to factor in sometimes if they understand you, okay. Because you have your own ideas and then you're trying to understand what the professor is trying to tell you and then you have to understand what that other student is trying to tell you. And this often happens, and we reach some kind of misunderstanding, okay. And we pay attention to when the professor either looks at you or doesn't look at you, acknowledges you verbally or nonverbally. Okay, and we don't know what's going on in their heads, so you may have your hand raised or in this case if it's virtual you put up your virtual hand and they miss you, we're going to interpret that as something, right. When you think that you have a good relationship with your professor and then one day you feel like you're ignored that's us trying to understand what's going on in this context. So, you're trying to communicate in that way. And why I'm bring up communication here in a healthy relationship is we need to understand each other. If we don't, then we're going to have a conflict. So, there are different types of communication as I said. So, there's the verbal, so what I'm doing today is verbal. And you guys are nonverbal right now so you're listening. So, I'm taking it that you're listening. I communicated with you that we're going to have Q and A at the end of this, so you heard me. You can use the chat feature as I said or write your questions there and I will answer them during the Q and A. So, I'm using all kinds of different ways to communicate to you and I'm trying to be as formal and informal with you by bringing up different kinds of examples from when I do counselling. One of the things with communication is and you may know this also from your various classes or from personal experience, we use either closed questions which require a yes and no or open-ended questions. So, for example, I will say is that okay that we used Q and A at the end and then that would elicit a yes and no. If I said something like what do you guys think if we leave Q and A at the end, so that leaves it open, right. So, I'll get different kinds of responses, okay. So, depending on what you want to hear from the other person and if we're looking at romantic relationships I'm wondering if you like me instead of saying do you like me. Do you like me is like yes and no but if you leave it open and you say I'm wondering if you like me, then they get to think about it and say well you know blah, blah, blah, blah, blah and then you'll get more detail, okay. It's important to get more details because that way you get to know the person a lot more and you get to kind of control the kind of response you want. Because if you just want a yes and no and this goes with the professor, if you just want a yes and no, then that leaves you kind of feeling kind of like empty right. It's like oh okay is that it, like that. Because that's why the professor always says is there any more questions. Have I answered your question like that, because they don't know if you actually understand what they're trying to tell you, okay, alright. I hope that was useful.

Emotions

Okay, because I deal in counselling we use emotions a lot and when I see a client I get to sense the emotion based on their nonverbal, and I'll go back here, based on their nonverbal communication or verbal, okay. or visual responses to my questions, okay. Sometimes people will use a pen or what not or they look down and I get to interpret that based on my training because you know we have to understand sometimes people

don't want to talk. Because that's what I do for a living I talk, and I listen. So, emotions are this, it's a biological state regulated by the nervous system that responds to thoughts feelings and behaviours. What that means is whatever you're feeling your body responds. So, whether we sweat or we get cold or our heart starts beating, or your feet start tapping or your mind goes somewhere else or you distract yourself, it's being driven by whatever emotion you're feeling. Sometimes you don't even know that you're feeling something, but your body and your mind work together and they know. And then it's their job to let you know that they're not feeling too good. So, for example, if in person class and the professor is talking very loudly or talking very softly that will elicit an emotional response. So, if they're talking very slowly or softly you may feel frustrated, okay, you may feel frustrated. And then that frustration might turn into this, did someone come in, sorry I'm letting someone in. So, someone has come in, welcome, I'm just midpoint through the presentation. So, we're just talking about emotions here. So, again, where was I? Okay so it will elicit an emotional response depending on your mood that day. And this can affect your day and if you're in class and you're interacting with your professor or with other students this will affect your ability to concentrate. So, it's important to understand what you're feeling that day. So, when you come to counselling, this is what we talk about because if you're feeling bored, if you're feeling agitated we get to understand what you did the day before, the night before and this often affects how you feel that day, okay. So, you may not be responsive to what the professor is saying because you feel that they're boring and that's because, you know, your mind is thinking about something else. And again, with relationships this is what we think about, how the other person made me feel. Okay and we'll come back to that. These are the basic emotions that you'll be feeling, sad, happy, excited, angry, scared or feeling a lot of love. But there are many other emotions that come from these basic emotions and that's why our body sometimes doesn't feel like ourselves, okay. When it starts becoming complex like that, your mind wants to know what's going on and that's when we feel kind of distracted. So, that's when we look at, okay what's going on here. Should I focus on the lecture or should I try to understand what's going on with me? Did I feel ignored or did I feel like someone is paying attention to me, that kind of think, okay. This is something to think about.

Perspectives, Boundaries & Conflicts

Okay, so here we are we're back to us, me and how my perspective or my point of view on how I interact with my friends, my family, my classmates or coworkers, my partner and my acquaintances. This will depend on the day, okay. Again, I mentioned one thing about not sleeping well last night. Well, if I wake up grumpy or tired and I have a friend that really needs to talk to me, I may not be available but because I'm the kind of person that is always available, I'm going to say yes, okay, even though I'm feeling grumpy and tired. This friend now will react and say you're not paying attention to me, how come? I am paying attention to you. No, you're not and then so it goes back and forth. And you can use that same example with, you know, your partner, even with your classmates when you're in group assignments, with your family especially, okay, or with your profession, you know. Constantine are you paying attention, you know, that kind of thing, okay. And we may react to that and they think you don't know what's going on in my life. Why are you thinking I'm not paying attention, see? So that's the conflict that

we're talking about. So, it's important to maintain this kind of boundary. If we let, you know that saying, you're letting them get to you, it's because your boundaries are a little bit fragile right now and they are able to come in and penetrate that boundary. Boundaries protect us and I said limit, but it limits our interactions with others. So, this is your stop sign to say you know what I think a need a moment and I'll get back to you is that okay. So, that's what we say. We make them feel okay about them asking questions, but we also maintain our boundaries. I hope that makes sense. And that's because we don't want to get into a conflict, a disagreement and this can often happen like let's say we're at work, okay. Hey Constantine, can you do this and this and then someone else says hey Constantine can you do that and that. And I'm like but I'm supposed to do this and this. Yeah well do this first and then your mind just tries to figure out what it should do first. And if I got good sleep I'll be able to make a decision actually and say you know what I'll get to you, but this person asked me first. But if I didn't get enough sleep and I'm grumpy, I'll say you know what, I'm going home. So, that's how we deal with it sometimes, okay. So, my perspective is I need to protect myself. Their perspective is you're lazy, you see. That's being subjective. If I'm being objective, I'm going to say I'm here to work but I partied last night so do I have any excuse to not do my work, that's being objective. They're going you're lazy Constantine, okay. That's all I see. I'm lazy today but I'm not lazy all the time, so you're judging me for this one day. Anyways, so that's the conflict that's arising, okay, and the different perspectives. So, that's why it's important to know what your boundaries are, and boundaries can be physical, psychological, emotional, okay. It can protect or limit. So, that's up to you to decide how thick or strong your boundaries are. You get to decide who you want to let in emotionally, psychologically, sexually, physically, etc., and know what your boundaries are, and you should know what their boundaries are. And if you don't know what their boundaries are, it's okay to ask, right. We don't know we're not mind readers and that's why we always ask. So, for example, if you are in an intimate relationship and you know your partner wants to do more then what you're comfortable with, we say actually no I'm not comfortable with that. And then they'll ask why not. Well, yep Mark I see you, so I will get to the questions after. And so, it's okay to say no. No doesn't mean that you are denying, it just means that you're respecting your ability to choose, okay, to have, what they say, agency over yourself. A conflict is a struggle for power. In the strong sense of the word, it's a struggle for power meaning who has control over something. It can also mean that it's a strong disagreement between two people or more, okay. That's what a conflict is. Like in war torn areas there are conflict situations because they have different perspectives and sometimes their boundaries have been infringed upon. It's the same thing with personal relationships. So, what I said about countries those are complex relationships. And I talked about emotions because we don't want to get into anger because anger results into not a very good outcome because differences are not resolved. Okay, the idea is to resolve the differences and come up with a solution. Okay.

Yes or No – Making Decisions

So, here we go. We're almost nearing the end and we'll get to the questions after and I'll turn off the recording. So, here's something that I'm going to go over with you, and I'll run through it quickly. So, before I decide or act I should think about whether it's what

I'm thinking is objective, meaning it's without bias or is it subjective meaning there is bias. So, the example I said that Constantine you're lazy. That's very subjective. Constantine I understand you were tired last night so I'll give you, you know, half an hour to organize yourself and then could you do that work. So, that's an objective response to me. We have to understand what is information versus emotion. So, emotion is I'm feeling like you don't really like me, okay, that's the emotion. I understand that you don't really know me, so that's the information. So, it's actually facts versus feeling, okay. We have to understand what is literal versus what is metaphorical. You know you're like really slow like a turtle. That's metaphorical, okay. Literal is you are so slow that you can't even move. That's really literal. So, there's a difference here. So, we have to understand oh is this a joke? Are you just using an example oh I get it and you're not insulting me? So, see we have to clarify especially if we come from different countries and sometime culturally we don't understand what they're saying to us, okay. So, it's okay to ask sorry can you repeat that. I don't understand what you're saying. So, that puts the other person in a situation where they have to kind of step back and say oh right, right sorry and then now they understand that we don't understand, right. So, we have to be mindful of being too precise. Oh, you're so slow and then we question it. What do you mean slow? You mean like intelligence or do you mean like physical and then that's where, you know, the disagreements we start minimizing them because now we understand what they're saying. Quantity versus quality. So, for example, the amount of times they have to tell us or the amount of times or the one time that we can tell them and it's robust or it's enough, okay. Here as I said earlier, if they don't understand us then they're going to misunderstand, so we have to explain. I talked about communication. If we don't communicate well then there's going to be miscommunication. When we don't articulate ourselves we're going to misspeak and sometimes if language is an issue, it's okay to say, you know, sorry and by the way guys, English is the most difficult language in the world because they have many ways to say one thing, so that's why when we say I love you for example, you know, depending on your tone, depending on, you know, the context, it can be misunderstood as something else. So, it's okay to say you know if we speak another language we say how do you say in English this and this and then the English-speaking person will say oh you mean this and then we say yeah that's I meant, okay. So, that way we don't make a mistake and then that way we don't midjudge. Okay and then there might be other examples that we can think about before we say something, before we take action, okay. In that way we don't get into conflict. So, I hope that's making sense to you guys. In that way you understand what your boundaries are, okay.

Be and Do you!

So, we are nearing the end and I said just be you. Get to know yourself before you get to know others and that means what kind of a relationship do I want and need, okay. To need a relationship means that it's something that sustains me, okay. To want a relationship, it's something that I wish for, okay. So, you don't really need it right now, but you would like to have it, okay. What are my personal values? What are their personal values? Values will be like trust, honesty, social justice, kindness, compassion. So, if these values you find in other people and that's what you have, then chances are you're going to connect, right. And that means in all of your spheres like in professional,

personal, okay. If you share the same values chances are you're going to connect and if you connect you'll be able to communicate what you want. You'll be able to communicate what you need and then vice versa, okay. It's important to understand what am I feeling? What are they feeling, okay? And then are we on the same page as far as what our definitions are of feelings? And if that's true then that means we can move ahead, okay. What is my or their perspective on the situation that's currently happening? So, for example, next week you're going to be in class and, you know, there's going to be some conflict and misunderstandings because of technology and all of that. So, we step back, and we go what's my perspective on this situation. Did I have a good sleep last night? Did I get organized? Because if we're not organized, then we're not prepared and then we come to class and we feel angry or agitated already. So, we take a step back and we go okay what if the professor isn't prepared. See, so that's another thing. So, we have to like understand each other's perspectives. And then okay what am I capable of today? What is my boundary, okay? What is my threshold psychologically, emotionally, intellectually, okay, physically like can I sit on the chair for like, you know, four hours? Can I take a break? Okay, that's what your boundaries are. And then if you get into conflict just try to understand what is the conflict. What is driving this conflict? Why do I feel like angry or frustrated or why do I feel distracted by certain things, okay? So, that's something that, you know, if you want to take a screenshot or I'll come back to the screens that you want me to come back to and you can take a screenshot if you want but basically that's it. It's like be you, and do you, okay. So, that's it.