



Dear 8<sup>th</sup> grade parent or guardian,

Your 8<sup>th</sup> grade student just participated in two days of prevention programming with WISE through their health class. For decades, WISE has worked with Upper Valley school districts to facilitate education to end gender-based violence.

During the first day, we brainstormed what we have learned about relationships (dating and friendships) from the media. We talked about friendships between girls, then friendships between boys, and ended with dating relationships. We realized that so much of what we are taught is based on limiting and harmful stereotypes that normalize boys being aggressive and powerful, and girls being treated like objects. WISE focuses on gender stereotypes as a central strategy for preventing gender-based violence. This approach is substantiated by research that demonstrates that an adherence to traditional gender norms is a significant risk factor for dating and sexual violence (Zurbriggen, E.L, 2010 & The CDC, 2018). Ultimately, we decided that there are a number of qualities that we value in our friendships and dating relationships that have nothing to do with stereotypes about gender.

On the second day we read a scenario about Dave and Julie, who are dating. Dave is older, and has a lot of power over Julie that he uses to control her. We talked as a class about the harmful impact of Dave's behaviors, and ways that we could demonstrate support for Julie.

## Parenting for Prevention

### Talk about relationships with your pre-teen:

- You can ask them what they learned during their class time with WISE!
- Check in with your pre-teen about what pressures they may be facing to start dating.
- Ask about their friends and their dating lives. They might be more willing to talk about dating if is in reference to their friends rather than themselves. Use this as an opportunity to set healthy expectations.
- Try to have an open dialogue about expectations around dating and be open to compromise. Let your child feel heard, and explain why you've set certain expectations.
- Identify together another adult who your pre-teen can talk to and ask questions about relationships with.

### For more information:

- Read, **Does Your Relationship Need a Checkup?** [scarleteen.com/article/relationships/does\\_your\\_relationship\\_need\\_a\\_checkup](http://scarleteen.com/article/relationships/does_your_relationship_need_a_checkup)
- Watch, **The Mask You Live In** and **Miss Representation** on Netflix.
- Watch, **A Compassionate, Empathy-Based Approach to Consent**, [youtube.com/watch?v=rOh\\_2me-OW58&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOh_2me-OW58&feature=youtu.be)