

## Middle School Prevention Program Description

WISE programming is consistent with federal and state health education guidelines and based on research and best practices to end gender-based violence. Lessons are delivered in two parts each school year to build on content and skills learned in previous years of programming with WISE. The strategies of WISE's Prevention and Education Program reflect the Center for Disease Control's Social-Ecological Model connecting the individual, relational, community, and societal factors that influence real and lasting change.

### Middle School Lessons

#### 5th Grade

*The first and longest relationship we have is with ourselves. Connecting with how our bodies give us information and identifying our authentic values give us strategies for safety and emotional regulation that can be particularly useful during this period of developmental growth.*

**Body Sense:** Students reflect on how their senses help them experience and make sense of the world. Sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell help us identify when we are in danger or need support as well as how to regulate ourselves when we need comfort. Everyone is different, so students practice using communication to share their own experiences and appreciate our differences.

**Me Cube:** Students take stock of the pervasive messages and pressures around us that tell us who we are supposed to be or what we are supposed to value. By defining our own core values, we practice cutting through the noise, staying true to ourselves, and celebrating the differences that make each of us unique.

#### 5th Grade Learning Objectives

- Experience the connection between physical senses and emotional regulation.
- Develop skills for identifying external pressures and expectations.
- Increase familiarity and appreciation for individual interests and attributes.

#### 6th Grade

*At an age when many young people are increasingly accessing media and technology, learning to be conscious consumers of the messages around us is a critical life skill.*

**Gender Stereotypes:** In an environment saturated by media, it is crucial to understand what is being sold to us and why. This class builds analytical skills to identify how media shapes our ideas about ourselves and each other. Using advertisements from popular magazines, students learn to identify and resist unhealthy messages about gender stereotypes and relationships.

**Creating Change:** This lesson emphasizes the potential we all have to shift cultural norms. Students identify their values, such as fairness and equality, and imagine seeing them represented in media. Then, they put their vision onto a poster to be hung in the school.

#### 6th Grade Learning Objectives

- Identify harmful messages about gender stereotypes in media.
- Collaborate to replace stereotypes with pro-social messages and collective action.

#### 7th Grade

*Moving into later middle school, we start to provide specific information to students about consent, harassment, and how to help a friend.*

**Consent:** Everyone has the right to say what happens with their bodies and has a responsibility to respect other people's bodies. Through a series of middle school scenarios, students explore all of the ways we communicate and how to be sure we pay close enough attention to each other.

**Sexual Harassment:** 8 in 10 students experience some form of sexual harassment during school, impacting their ability to learn and fully participate in their academic growth. Through vignettes and group discussion, students parse harmless from harmful and strategize safe ways to intervene, support, and ask for help.

### 7th Grade Learning Objectives

- Define consent and identify communication cues.
- Define sexual harassment and identify harmful behaviors.
- Identify personal responsibility to recognize and intervene in unsafe or disrespectful situations.

### 8th Grade

*In preparation for high school, students consider relationships – friendship and romantic – and the stereotypes that may be getting in the way of having the kinds of relationships we really want.*

**Healthy Relationships:** Referring back to what we know about media messages and stereotypes, students consider the restrictive and harmful gender norms that limit fulfilling relationships of all kinds. We reflect on the ways we might accidentally reinforce those messages and make personal action plans for change.

**Consent:** Students review consent via a dating and sexual violence scenario. Discussion connects the stereotypes from the previous lesson to the behaviors in the scenario, illustrating how abusive behaviors are learned. We identify warning signs and strategize ways to be positive bystanders when we see harmful behaviors happening to people we know.

### 8th Grade Learning Objectives

- Connect gender stereotypes to the normalization of relationship abuse.
- Identify warning signs of abuse in relationships.
- Practice safe strategies to help a friend.

## Middle School Prevention Program - Content Rationale

### INDIVIDUAL

- Individuals who strongly adhere to traditional gendered norms have higher risk for perpetration (Zurbriggen, 2010 & Center for Disease Control, 2017).
- Emotional health and connectedness is a protective factor against perpetration (CDC, 2017).
- Empathy and concern for how one's actions affect others is protective against perpetration (Yarnell, L., et al., 2014 & CDC, 2017).

### RELATIONAL

- Peers are one of the most significant social risk factors in health behavior (Yarnell, et al., 2014).
- Association with sexually aggressive, hyper-masculine, and delinquent peers is a risk factor for sexual violence perpetration (Zurbriggen, 2010 & CDC, 2017).

### SOCIAL

- Norms that maintain women's inferiority and sexual submissiveness increase perpetration (CDC, 2017).
- Norms that support sexual violence increase perpetration (CDC, 2017).
- Norms that support male superiority and sexual entitlement increase perpetration (CDC, 2017).
- Changing social attitudes around the acceptability of violence decreases perpetration (Abramsky, 2016).
- Recognition of culturally constructed messages about the roles of men and women and lack of power afforded to women/girls in relationships decreases perpetration (Heise, 1998).

## National Health Education Standards

**HES 2:** Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors.

**HES 4:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health.

**HES 7:** Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks.

**HES 8:** Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.