Safety Point:
Safe Relationships and Safe Sex
Relationships are when you connect with other people and form bonds.

- There are many types of relationships:
  - Romantic (I’m in love!)
  - Sexual (We’ve decided to have sex.)
  - Platonic (Just friends!)
  - Professional (We work together.)
  - Medical, as in the relationship you have with your doctor
  - Family, as in the relationships you have with your relatives

- It is good to have different types of relationships.
Romantic relationships can be fun and an important part of your life, but sometimes romantic relationships can become unsafe and dangerous.

Romantic relationships can be unsafe when:

- One person in the relationship is hurting the other person or forcing them to do things they do not want to do
- You and your partner do not practice safe sex – this can lead to sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy
Sometimes, one person isn’t nice to the other person in a romantic or sexual relationship.

- Everyone has disagreements once in a while.
- Domestic violence is when an argument between two people in a relationship involves:
  - Hitting
  - Punching
  - Excessive and frequent psychological abuse (like hurtful and mean-spirited words)
  - Other violence
- There is no excuse for domestic violence!
  - Even if someone is angry with you, this does not give that person the right to hurt you.
If you think you are experiencing domestic violence, tell someone you trust!

- You can call this number:
  
  1-800-799-SAFE
  (7233)

- There is always someone you can turn to for help. You don’t have to face this alone.
It may be scary to admit that someone you love is physically hurting you.

- As a person with a developmental disability, it may be even harder for you to tell someone that you are being hurt by a person you love.

- This may be because:
  - You don’t want to lose the person
  - You don’t think anyone will believe you
  - You’re not sure if what is happening is wrong

- Remember – it is never okay for someone to hurt you!
It is your right to have a safe relationship with another person.

- When you find a person who makes you have “that feeling of love inside,” you may forget that you have a right to be safe.

- Even if you love someone, it doesn’t give them the right to physically or emotionally hurt you.

- If you are experiencing domestic violence:
  - Tell someone you trust like a support provider, your family, or your doctor
  - You could even tell the police because domestic violence is a crime
Relationships can also be unsafe if one person is forcing the other person to do things they do not want to do – like have sex before being ready.

- Sex should only happen between two consenting adults.
  - Consenting means that both of you are agreeing to have sex without any pressure.
  - It means you are choosing to have sex.

- If someone forces you to have sex when you don’t want to, it’s called rape.
  - If you have been raped, tell someone you trust so that they can help you.
  - You can also call the police.
Rape is a very serious crime.

- It is possible for someone close to you, or even someone you love, to be the person who rapes you.
- If you don’t want to have sex and someone, even if it is your boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife, friend, or relative, forces you to have sex: it is still rape.
- If you know who your attacker is, it is sometimes called “date rape.”
- Rape is a crime, whether you know who raped you or not.
To protect your health, practice safe sex.

- Unless you are trying to become pregnant, everyone should practice safe sex so they don’t get sick.

- Because sex is so intimate, many illnesses can be passed along during sex, like:
  - HIV / AIDS
  - Chlamydia
  - Gonorrhea
  - Genital Warts

- You can find out more about these on this sheet:
There are many ways to practice safe sex.

- If you are a man, you should wear a new condom every time you have sex.
  - Make sure that the condom doesn’t have any holes.
  - Only use water-based lubricants with condoms. Oil-based lubricants like lotion or Vaseline will make holes in a latex condom.
  - If you are allergic to latex, you can use a polyethylene condom.

- If you are a woman, you can use a dental dam, which is a square piece of latex used during oral sex.
If you are sexually active, it’s a good idea to get tested for diseases often.

- Frequent testing for sexually transmitted illnesses not only protects you from getting sick, but it also protects your partner from getting sick!
- Testing should be done during your annual medical exam or before you initially have sex with a person.
- Visit your doctor or a clinic to get tested.
- While you are there, they will take a sample of your blood.
- They will call you later with your results.
If you find out that you have a sexually transmitted disease, don’t be scared!

- There are treatments for sexually transmitted illnesses that your doctor can explain to you.
- Ask lots of questions and write down your doctor’s advice.
- If you do take medication for a sexually transmitted disease, make sure you follow all of the directions.
- Tell your sexual partners as soon as you can!
One of the best ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases is to practice abstinence.

- Abstinence is when you don’t have sex at all.
- It’s okay to practice abstinence, especially if you are not in a romantic relationship with anyone.
- Some of the benefits of practicing abstinence are:
  - You can have more time to spend with your friends and family
  - You can take up new and exciting hobbies
  - You won’t be at risk for sexually transmitted diseases
  - You won’t get pregnant
You can find out more information in this month’s Feature and Health Point.

- This month’s Feature presentation is about sexually transmitted diseases.

- This month’s Health Point presentation is about a kind of sexually transmitted disease called HIV / AIDS.
Check out these links to find more information on maintaining safe relationships.

- **Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia: Domestic Violence**

- **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**
  - [http://www.ncadv.org/](http://www.ncadv.org/)

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**
  - [http://www.ndvh.org/](http://www.ndvh.org/)
You can also check out these links to find out more about practicing safe sex.

- **MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia: Safe Sex**

- **The Coalition for Positive Sexuality**
  - [http://www.positive.org/JustSayYes/safesex.html](http://www.positive.org/JustSayYes/safesex.html)

- [http://www stdservices.on.net/std/prevention](http://www stdservices.on.net/std/prevention)