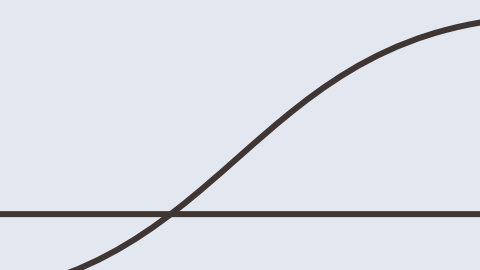




# **Facilitating a Healthy Relationships Group for College Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

Myia Makupson, M.Ed, LPC (OH), LSW (OH)  
LeAnn Wills, M.Ed, LSC (TN), NCC





**“We can improve our  
relationships with others by  
leaps and bounds if we  
become encouragers instead  
of critics.”**

JOYCE MEYER

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# Presenter: Myia Makupson



**Myia Makupson is a first year Counselor Education Doctoral student at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Myia is a Licensed Social Worker and Licensed Professional Counselor in Ohio. Myia is a member of CSI, ACA, ACES, and TCA. Myia has previously worked as a trauma therapist at Cleveland Rape Crisis Center.**

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# Presenter: LeAnn Wills



**LeAnn Wills is a first year Counselor Education Doctoral student at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. LeAnn is a licensed professional school counselor in the state of Tennessee as well as a National Certified Counselor. LeAnn is a member of ASCA, TCA, CSI, and ACA including ACES, AHC, ACAC, and AMCD. LeAnn has previously worked in public and private PK-12 educational settings and has experience running psychoeducational groups, developing curriculum, and with crisis response.**

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# What is the UTK **FUTURE** Program?

FUTURE is a program for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The goal of the program is to assist individuals with a successful transition from high school to adult life.

This 2-3 year program provides vocational, academic, social, and the tools to learn independent living skills.

Individuals also have access to mental health counseling services. At the end of the program students receive a vocational certificate.

# Myths Regarding Group

They will not be able to have in-depth conversations about relationships

They will not engage in the conversations with one another

You will have low attendance for this group due to them being assigned

You will need to use simple terms for them to understand

# Group Population

Group members are assigned to group by the FUTURE director

The group consisted of 4 males and 2 females

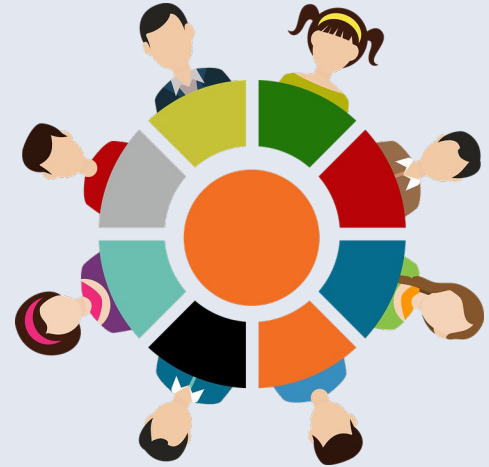
2 of the members have been FUTURE students for 2 years

4 members of the group were first year students of FUTURE

3 members have experienced romantic relationships

3 members of the group have not had a romantic relationship

None of the members identified friendships as a type of relationship before beginning the group



How do we get these individuals to want to engage in these difficult conversations?

How do we make THIS experience different from others?



# Promoting Collaboration

## Step 1

Take away the teacher-student hierarchy in the room

Ask individuals the information that have about relationships

The information that they want to know about relationships

## Step 2

Provide psychoeducation regarding types of relationships

Their knowledge of unhealthy vs healthy relationships

Engage in a certain level of self-disclosure

## Step 3

Incorporate fun activities into group to engage participants

Allow participants to put the knowledge they learned in action

Provide time to answer questions and provide clarification

# Types of Relationships

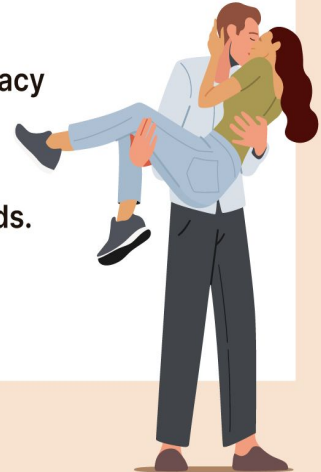
Romantic & Platonic

Healthy & Unhealthy



**"In a healthy relationship, vulnerability is wonderful. It leads to increased intimacy and closer bonds. When a healthy person realizes that he or she hurt you, they feel remorse and they make amends. It's safe to be honest."**

— Christina Enevoldsen



## Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationship



### HEALTHY

- Comfortable Pace
- Trust
- Honesty
- Independence
- Respect
- Equality
- Kindness
- Taking Responsibility
- Healthy Conflict
- Fun
- Being comfortable



### UNHEALTHY

- Intensity
- Possessiveness
- Manipulation
- Isolation
- Sabatoge
- Belittling
- Guilt-tripping
- Volatility
- Deflecting Responsibility
- Betrayal



## FRIENDSHIPS

### Healthy

✓ Supportive

✓ Stands behind you

✓ Encourages you to grow

✓ Pushes you outside of your comfort zone

✓ Transparent and Honest

### Unhealthy

✗ Blindly supportive

✗ Fights your battles for you

✗ Criticizes or judges

✗ Pressures you to do something you don't want to do

✗ Manipulative and Deceitful

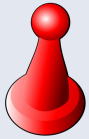
# Facilitators Relationship Impact

## FACILITATOR COLLABORATION

Key Areas	Implications
Areas of Expertise	Group Planning Phase: topic discussion and ordering
Competency	Topic discussion leads
Facilitation Style	Balanced back and forth during group, co-leading
Individual Assumptions and Values	Alignment of goals, desires, & expectations of the group & members
Experiences Running Previous Groups	Learning through lived experiences & sharing those with one another

# Group Activities

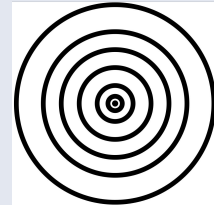
## Relationship Heads Up



## Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships



## Relationship Circle



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# Group Limitations

A pre/post survey was not  
completed

Group members were at  
different levels of  
knowledge regarding  
relationships

Group members are  
assigned to group by  
FUTURE director

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# Group Responses

Group attendance was higher than previous groups. All members attended group consistently.

Group members were unaware sexual assault was experienced by adults and not just children

Group members reported this being one of the only spaces available for them to ask questions about sex/intimacy

Group members appreciated being able to hear relationship experiences from their peers

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LOVE IS  
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN  
TWO HEARTS  
FIND THEIR HAPPY PLACE  
RIGHT BESIDE  
— EACH OTHER. —  
♥♥

# QUESTIONS



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<https://futureut.utk.edu/>

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