

PARENT LETTER 2: FITTING IN & ACCEPTANCE

The second lesson of *Safer, Smarter Teens: Personal Power* included a video scenario with Mike and Sarah discussing their after school plans. Mike is Sarah's first boyfriend and would like some "alone time" with Sarah ("Are you going to be alone at home? We are going out, right?"). Commenting on this video scenario, Lauren acknowledged that we all want to be accepted and loved, and she provided guidelines to help manage our relationships safely. A safe relationship was defined as one with an appropriate balance of power. An appropriate balance of power is when both people share in decision-making, feel comfortable communicating, and respect each other's wishes. She reviewed the scenario and asked students to pay attention to body boundaries and listening to your Guiding Voice. She identified an imbalance of power in a relationship as a possible red flag. She introduced a "Power Play" – TFA (Think, Feel, Act) as a way to maintain a safe relationship.

This concept is based on tested psychological theories as a foundation to evaluate a situation. Thinking about a situation is the objective part such as gathering data is in the scientific method. What do you see? What's going on? Feeling is more subjective and individual. How do you feel about it? Acting, of course, is the behavior that follows. What will you do to stay safe?

PARENT CONNECTION:

Adolescents' worlds are expanding to include emotional and physical attractions, which may lead them into situations that compromise their values and comfort level, compounded by their need to be accepted. By keeping the lines of communication open, you can help your child feel comfortable coming to you with difficult issues. Review the concepts of safe vs. unsafe relationships and the balance of power in relationships with your child. Remind your child that when someone is feeling pressured to do something that makes him or her uncomfortable, this is unsafe.

TIPS TO FURTHER TODAY'S LESSON:

Discuss with your child the concepts below that were introduced in the lesson. For example, the idea that he or she has the right to set body boundaries and expect them to be respected. You might ask, "Is it ok to go along with something you know and feel to be wrong to maintain a friendship?" Or "Can you identify red flags in unsafe relationships?"