



Relationship Smarts Plus (RS+) 2008-2013 Impact Summary Report *

Relationship Smarts Plus (RS+), an evidence-based curriculum developed by the Dibble Institute, includes 13 lessons that focus on personal development related to identity, goals and values, distinguishing between healthy versus unhealthy relationship behaviors, safe choices in forming relationships, preventing dating violence, developing communication skills, and preparation for adult roles and responsibilities related to parenting and marriage.

Participating in RS+ Improves:

- Awareness of healthy dating patterns and the importance of mutual respect, shared values, and commitment in developing stable romantic relationships.
- Knowledge of healthy versus unhealthy relationships, the ability to recognize patterns of abuse, and understanding of the choices and behaviors that put teens' physical and emotional health at risk.
- Problem solving and communication skills to facilitate open and safe discussions about relationship needs and views and to effectively manage differences that arise in relationships.
- Levels of self-efficacy in relationships to help teens feel empowered to make good choices in relationships.

Outputs: UGA Extension has reached 5463 GA Youth.

- Since initiating training in the RS+ program in 2008, **61 county FACS and 4-H Extension agents across 43 counties.**
- As well, UGA Extension has trained **122 community professionals across 10 counties** in the RS+ program.
- Since launching programming in 2009, RS+ has been offered (in part or in its entirety) by UGA Extension 111 times, reaching **3278 unique youth across 31 counties.**
- Since 2012, UGA Extension has provided training, technical assistance, and support to GA Department of Family and Children Services, Public Health and other community funded agencies offering afterschool programs to at-risk youth as part of the GA Personal Responsibility Education Program (GA-PREP). This state teen pregnancy prevention project is funded by the Family and Youth Services Bureau, and in partnership with the GA Department of Family and Children Services. To date, RS+ has been implemented 76 times and reached **2185 youth across 10 counties.**

Example comments of what youth reported learning:

- *You need to think about the things you expect before you date.*
- *How to identify abusive relationships.*
- *Make good choices. Don't let others persuade you to do something you don't want to do.*
- *The difference between conditional and unconditional relationships.*
- *These lessons have taught me to be nicer and kinder to ladies.*
- *It will help me complain about things without being mean or rude.*
- *You should not have sex right away.*
- *I've learned relationships are not all about sex.*
- *Be who you are and not what your friends want you to be.*
- *Social and emotional values take the longest to develop.*
- *What a healthy relationship contains.*
- *How relationships need chemistry, friendship, and commitment.*
- *How parents treat each other (lovingly or not-so-lovingly) can affect the child.*
- *Never pressure someone into doing something they don't want to.*
- *A baby needs both parents.*
- *If your friends are doing something wrong, you should be able to tell them what they're doing is wrong.*
- *How to stay away from an abusive relationship.*

*For a complete 2013 report, and to learn about other resources available from the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension to support healthy relationships, visit <http://www.gamarriages.org>. For questions or additional information, contact Dr. Ted Futris, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Science, at tfutris@uga.edu.

Outcomes: Participating youth report increased capacity to develop healthy relationships.

Of the 3278 youth who participated in at least one RS+ class, data was collected from 2023 adolescents across 27 counties. The majority of these youth were in the 8th grade (60%), 13-14 years of age (62%; M= 13.91) and Caucasian (45%). Also, 82% of the youth reported that they had been in a dating relationship.

Youth gained knowledge. At the conclusion of each lesson, participants were asked to report whether their knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the various topics/skills that were covered in the lesson was (1) poor, (2) fair, (3) good, or (4) excellent before the program and then asked what their understanding was like after the program. Each lesson evaluation included five items and mean before and after scores were computed with higher scores reflecting greater understanding. As summarized below, on average, youth reported their understanding of the principles/skills taught was “fair” prior to each lesson and significantly improved to “good” or “excellent” afterwards. When asked to rate how helpful the lesson was, the majority rated each lesson as either *very helpful* or *helpful*.

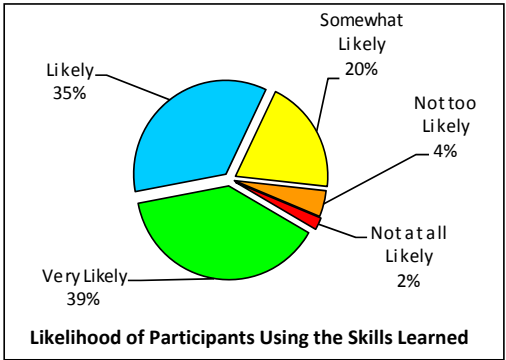
Participants’ Reported Change across Relationship Smarts Lessons (n = 3278).

Curriculum Lesson	Offered Lesson	Attended Lesson	Completed Evaluation	Mean Score (SD)		t-value	% who improved	% helpful
				Before	After			
Lesson 1	1123	921	869	2.69 (0.70)	3.28 (0.59)	26.37**	71%	92%
Lesson 2	1631	1260	877	2.78 (0.70)	3.34 (0.58)	28.29**	69%	94%
Lesson 3	975	683	638	2.69 (0.71)	3.30 (0.60)	21.95**	71%	94%
Lesson 4	367	248	227	2.29 (0.75)	3.35 (0.57)	20.06**	84%	96%
Lesson 5	637	473	442	2.52 (0.68)	3.41 (0.55)	27.29**	85%	98%
Lesson 6	1359	925	864	2.62 (0.74)	3.27 (0.62)	24.68**	69%	95%
Lesson 7	287	163	135	2.74 (0.68)	3.46 (0.52)	12.87**	76%	92%
Lesson 8	1606	1200	781	2.67 (0.75)	3.35 (0.61)	29.68**	70%	94%
Lesson 9	1387	982	687	2.65 (0.73)	3.24 (0.69)	23.96**	66%	94%
Lesson 10	274	157	130	2.50 (0.77)	3.36 (0.60)	12.57**	74%	97%
Lesson 11	633	431	417	2.86 (0.81)	3.40 (0.67)	14.00**	55%	95%
Lesson 12	227	138	127	2.65 (0.82)	3.45 (0.63)	10.76**	74%	96%

Note: See end of report for lesson descriptions. [†] p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01

Youth felt more confident, better about themselves, and that they would use the skills learned.

Of the 2023 youth who provided evaluation data, 1092 (54%) received at least four lessons (covering goals/values, characteristics of healthy vs. unhealthy relationships and communication strategies) and completed the *overall program evaluation* survey. This survey was designed to assess perceived changes in how confident they felt in applying the skills learned and various other attitudes and aspirations. Overall, the majority of youth felt that they were more confident than before the program in establishing healthy relationships with family/friends (77%) and dating partners (81%), listening (75%) and handling conflict (76%), and expressing their feelings and wants in a relationship (76%). As well, 74% of the participants felt better about themselves after the program and 94% reported they were likely to use the skills learned (see figure).



Example comments from youth regarding how the program helped:

- *Helped me learn how to communicate better in my relationships.*
- *This program has helped me a lot. When someone is pressuring me to have sex I can remember to wait until I’m married.*
- *This is going to help me in having a healthy relationship with family and friends. Also, it will help me in having a healthy dating relationship.*
- *Be more confident about who I am.*
- *I feel it will help me make good choices and think wisely.*
- *I feel that it helped me realize the importance of my future and how it is affected by the choices I make now.*

Relationship Smarts Plus (RS+) Lessons & Topics

Lesson	Topics		
SECTION 1: A FOUNDATION FOR UNDERSTANDING ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS			
1: Who Am I and Where Am I Going?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness of teen’s identity and possible selves Identify future goals and dreams as well as steps teens can begin taking now to reach these goals Practice resisting peer pressure and staying true to one’s self 		
2: Maturity Issues and What I Value*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of maturity Reflect on values and determine which ones are important to teens Identify personality and character qualities teens find important in others 		
3: Attractions and Infatuation*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of the building blocks and characteristics of healthy relationships Understand the impact that sex can have on a developing relationship Gain knowledge about what infatuation is and how it affects decision making Understand the difference between infatuation and genuine love 		
4: Love and Intimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become familiar with the concepts of love and lust and understand the difference between the two Learn to identify the three dimensions of love and recognize relationship problems that arise when these are unbalanced Develop an understanding of true intimacy and how it develops over time 		
SECTION 2: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DATING RELATIONSHIP PROCESSES			
5: Principles of Smart Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help teens recognize smart and not-so-smart relationship attitudes, behaviors, and choices Offer concrete guidelines for having “smart relationships” Explore the importance of compatibility for relationships and offer a list of key areas to consider 		
6: The Low-Risk Approach to Relationships: <i>Decide, Don’t Slide!</i>*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn the difference between a high-risk “sliding” vs. a low-risk “deciding” approach to developing relationships Gain insight about what’s important to learn about another person and oneself when developing a romantic relationship Practice identifying steps to make wise decisions about the person you are attracted to 		
7: Is It a Healthy Relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn to use a three question guide to decide if a relationship is healthy or unhealthy Understand what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like in the real world Learn how unmet needs can lead to poor relationship choices Foster communication about healthy relationships with trusted adults 		
8: Breaking Up and Dating Abuse*	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none; vertical-align: top;"> Part I: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand when it is time to end a relationship Identify better and worse ways to break-up with someone Learn how to deal with break-ups in a healthy way </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none; vertical-align: top;"> Part II: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of early warning signs and behaviors of abuse Practice setting boundaries at the first sign of disrespectful behavior Understand the consequences of dating abuse </td> </tr> </table>	Part I: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand when it is time to end a relationship Identify better and worse ways to break-up with someone Learn how to deal with break-ups in a healthy way 	Part II: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of early warning signs and behaviors of abuse Practice setting boundaries at the first sign of disrespectful behavior Understand the consequences of dating abuse
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SECTION 3: COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR HELATHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGES			
9: A Foundation for Good Communication*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate communication patterns learned while growing up Explore the impact anger has on one’s ability to communicate effectively Gain practice with the time-out skill as the Speaker-Listener Technique 		
10: Communication Challenges and More Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand negative patterns of communication that damage relationships including the four most damaging patterns Reduce negative communication patterns by practicing how to raise complaints effectively Assess communication patterns within one’s own relationship 		
SECTION 4: MARRIAGE AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE			
11: Through the Eyes of a Child*	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none; vertical-align: top;"> Part I: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand why healthy and stable parental relationships matter for a child Gain awareness of child outcomes and risks to babies of young and unmarried parents Understand child developmental needs </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none; vertical-align: top;"> Part II: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the characteristics of positive fathering and the unique contributions fathers can make to a child’s well-being Understand how a healthy relationship or marriage helps men become good fathers </td> </tr> </table>	Part I: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand why healthy and stable parental relationships matter for a child Gain awareness of child outcomes and risks to babies of young and unmarried parents Understand child developmental needs 	Part II: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the characteristics of positive fathering and the unique contributions fathers can make to a child’s well-being Understand how a healthy relationship or marriage helps men become good fathers
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12: Looking Toward the Future – Healthy Relationships and Healthy Marriages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the impact of a risky partner selection versus a wise partner selection Awareness of research findings on cohabitation, marital success, and skills-based prevention programs. Learn the “success sequence” for achieving future life and family goals and reduce one’s chances of poverty 		
13: Follow Your North Star	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the core concepts and skills of the curriculum Develop a personal success plan drawing on the skills and knowledge teens have learned 		

* This is one of the six core Relationship Smarts lessons. For a detailed overview of the RS+ curriculum, visit The Dibble Institute at <http://www.dibbleinstitute.org>.

2008-2013 Evaluation Summary of UGA Extension Outputs and Short-Term Impacts

INPUTS	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT	OUTCOMES - IMPACT		
What we invested to develop, deliver & evaluate the program	What we did to carry out the program.	What we yielded and/or who we reached.	The short term results of the program (<i>Learning</i>).	The medium term results of the program (<i>Action</i>).	The ultimate impact of the program. (<i>Achievement</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding (e.g., state and county level support; grants) • Staff/Faculty Effort (content specialists, FACS/4H county agents, clerical support) • Partners (e.g., Georgia middle and high schools, communities, agencies, faith-based and social service organizations) • Time (e.g., designing, coordinating, delivering, documenting, evaluating) • Space (e.g., program delivery) • Materials (curriculum, handouts, activity supplies, attendance sheets, lesson evaluations, post evaluations, attendance sheets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training FACS/4H agents on RS+ • Supplemental training and updates on RS+ • Establish partnerships with schools or other youth organizations where program will be implemented • County agents deliver RS+ program to youth • Retrospective pre then post test completed after each lesson • Overall program evaluation completed by those attending 4 or more “core lessons” • Prepare outcome/impact report for each county as well as a full state report for the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61 FACS/4H agents and 122 community partners across 43 GA counties • Program delivered across 27 counties through middle schools, high schools, youth organizations, etc. Total of 111 programs offered (7 programs included 6+ lessons). • 3278 youth reached through in-school programming • 2023 youth completed lesson evaluations to document knowledge gained. • 1092 youth completed the overall program evaluation to document confidence and skills gained • 64 county reports prepared for agents to share with community partners, and prospective funders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth improved in their understanding of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their own identity (71%) Maturity and personal values (69%) Infatuation versus genuine love (71%) Healthy vs. unhealthy relationships (76%) Signs of dating abuse (70%) Foundations of good communication (66%) Dealing with conflict (74%) • Youth felt more confident in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using learned skills to have healthy relationships with family and friends (77%) Being a good and sensitive listener (75%) Managing conflict in healthy ways (76%) Having a healthy dating relationship (81%) Expressing feelings and sharing their needs and wants with a dating partner (76%) • 74% of youth felt better about themselves • 94% of youth reported that they were likely to use the skills learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth increase in their practice of positive communication and conflict management skills • Youth exhibit lowered levels of risky sexual behaviors • Youth avoid or remove self from abusive relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain healthy peer and intimate relationships • Avoid premarital pregnancy • Establish healthy and stable future marriages