

◇ Chapter 27  
Responsible Behavior

Relationship Skills



PHYSICAL INTIMACY

Many people think of physical intimacy as an expression between people who share a sexual relationship. Physical intimacy, however, can express different kinds of closeness. A handshake with a business partner, a slap on the back from a teammate, a kiss between mother and daughter — all are examples of nonsexual physical intimacy.

**Directions:** Try the following activity and answer the questions below.

Up Close and Personal

Form a circle with at least five other classmates. Stand about two feet apart. After about thirty seconds, take one step forward, so that you are about one foot apart. Wait thirty seconds. Continue until you and your classmates are shoulder-to-shoulder. At each stage of this exercise, watch your classmates' reactions and think about your own feelings as the circle grows smaller.

**Thinking About What Happened**

1. How did you feel when you were standing in the largest circle? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How did your classmates act in the largest circle? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Did your feelings change as you stood closer together? If so, how? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did your classmates react as the circle grew smaller? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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5. Did you feel uncomfortable at any point? If so, when? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Would you have felt differently if everyone in the circle were a member of your family or one of your closest friends? Explain.

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7. How would you have felt if all the circle members were complete strangers to you and to each other?

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8. Identify two factors (other than familiarity) that influence a person's comfort with physical closeness. Explain the effect of each factor.

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9. Movies and television shows tend to focus on sexual physical intimacy. How do you think this affects society's reaction to nonsexual physical intimacy?

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10. Think of other times when people are placed in close contact with one another, such as waiting in line or riding in an elevator. What reactions have you noticed in those situations? How do they compare to those you saw in this activity?

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11. Do you think reaction to physical contact is learned or inborn? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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12. From this activity, what conclusions can you draw about people and physical intimacy? About your own reactions to closeness with others?

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