

What Is Love Anyway?

A Lesson Plan from *Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

Students will be able to:

ID.5.CC.1 – Students will be able to define sexual orientation as romantic attraction to an individual of the same gender or of a different gender.

TARGET GRADE:

Grade 6 – Optional Lesson 1

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- *3Rs Teacher's Guide* (pages 24)
- Projector and screen
- Computer with PowerPoint
- PowerPoint: "Sexual Orientation"
- White board and markers
- Index cards (one per student)

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

Read through the *3Rs Teacher's Guide* on teaching about gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation (pages 23-24).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

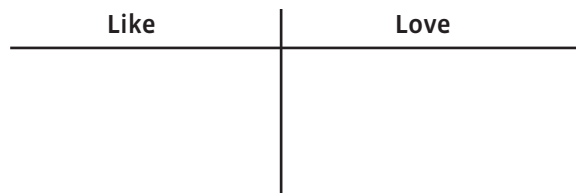
1. Describe the difference between "liking" and "loving."
[Knowledge]
2. Define "sexual orientation" and its most common categories.
[Knowledge]

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Start the session by asking students to take out a piece of paper and divide it in half by drawing a vertical line down the center.

Note to the Teacher: Students can also feel free to use their tablet or laptop if permitted.

Draw a similar line on the board. Then ask them to draw a horizontal line near the top, creating a "T". Do the same to demonstrate what you would like them to do. Then ask the students to write the word "like" on the top of the left side of the division, and the word "love" at the top of the right side. Do the same. When done, it should look like this:



(2 minutes)

STEP 2: Tell the students you are going to give them 60 seconds to come up with a list of 5 (or more) things they LIKE. Tell them these cannot be people, they have to be things – objects, activities, places, etc. Have them write what they like on the left side of their sheet or screen. Tell them to keep writing until you call time – but that they need to have a minimum of 5. Let them know they will have the option of sharing examples of these but will not be required to.

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Stop them at 60 seconds. Next, ask them to come up with a list of 5 (or more) things they LOVE. Again, be sure to emphasize that these cannot be people, they have to be things – objects, activities, place, etc. Call time at 60 seconds. Say, **“I am now going to ask for some volunteers to share something they said they like. Please remember that we always agree to respect our classmates, even if we disagree with something they may say. So if someone says they like something and you don’t like it, please do not judge or make fun of their choice.”** Ask for some responses and write those on the board on the left side of the line. After the “like” side is filled, ask for examples of things they said they love and write those on the right side.

Once the table has been filled on the board, ask the students what they notice about the lists. Sample responses might include, “Some people put things on the ‘like’ side while other people put those same things on the ‘love’ side;” “They’re very similar;” “They’re very different,” etc. Ask students:

“What was it like to do this?”

“Was it easier to think of things you like or things you love? Why?”

After students have shared some of their impressions of the experience of doing the activity, ask how they decided which things went on which list. Record key points from this feedback on the board, which may include references to the frequency with which they do something (the more they do it, the more they may like or love it); the duration relating to it (it could be something they’ve done every day after school or place they’ve visited for several years); emotional connection to it (a gift from or something that used to belong to a relative or friend), something they’re good at (playing a video game or a sport), etc. (12 minutes)

STEP 3: Explain that you will now be talking about people. Write an identical “T” with “like” and “love” written at the top of each side and ask the students, **“Who are some of the people in our lives we might like, and who are some of the people we would say we love?”** (Note – expect students to say some people can be liked as well as loved; if that is the case, write the person on both sides. Also, some students may see a person listed in one column and ask, “What if you don’t like or love them?” – such as a sibling. Acknowledge that this is a list of who we might have these feelings for and that some people may like or love a brother or sister. Finally, be sure to tell them that this must be people they know PERSONALLY – it should not include celebrities).

The figure might end up looking something like this, although the people and their placement may change:

Like		Love	
- A new student	- A new friend	- A friend you’ve had since you were very young	- A sibling
- A cousin	- A teacher	- A cousin	- A parent
- A mail carrier	- A friend’s parent		- A grandparent
- A coach	- Youth group leader		
- The custodian in your building or school	- Religious leader		
	- Camp counselor		

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Ask the students, **“So, what’s the difference? How do you know whether you like someone and when you love them?”** Have a discussion about this emphasizing, if it is not said, **“you just know.”** Explain that our feelings are not something we decide to feel – we just like or dislike someone or something. Say, **“While we may end up liking someone we didn’t like before – or liking an activity we hated at first – we can’t sit down and say, ‘I’m going to make myself like or love this activity or person.’”** (12 minutes)

STEP 4: Say, **“As we get older, our feelings start to change. We may experience a type of romantic love that we don’t have when we’re younger. It’s really hard to explain, because just like the liking and loving we just talked about, it’s something you just know when you feel it.”** Explain that when people are older they may end up in romantic relationships with each other that are different from friendships. People might have boyfriends, girlfriends, partners – or, when they’re older, they may choose to live together or get married. Sometimes, these adults will have children, and sometimes they won’t.

Say, **“Some people may want to have these types of relationships starting in middle school, and some aren’t interested until high school or later.”** Ask, **“What makes these types of relationships different from friendship or your relationships with your family members?”** Probe for: “You do different things together,” “you feel like being with that person all the time,” “you like doing nice things for them and think of what they might want to do before what you might want to do,” “you hold hands/kiss,” “when you get older, you might want to have sex with that person,” etc.

Say, **“As people get older, feelings of romantic love are different from what people feel for friends or family members.”** Start the PowerPoint and show the first slide as you say the following:

- Slide 1 – **“Sometimes, people will feel this way about people who are a different gender than they are. This is called being ‘heterosexual.’ You may also hear the word ‘straight.’”**
- Slides 2-3 – **“Sometimes, people will have these feelings for people who are the same gender as they are. This is called being ‘gay.’ Some gay women will call themselves ‘lesbians.’ And sometimes people might have romantic feelings for people of all genders. This is called being ‘bisexual.’ Our understanding of which gender or genders we feel love and attraction for is called our ‘sexual orientation.’”**
- Slide 4 – **“Even though the phrase ‘sexual orientation’ has the word ‘sexual’ in it, in many cases, people have strong feelings of love before feelings of sexual attraction or before acting on those feelings. You don’t need to have done anything sexual with someone to know your sexual orientation.”**
- **“As you start going through puberty, your hormones – those natural chemicals in your body – will start going up and down. This means you may feel really intense emotions from time to time – both positive and negative. This may also be when you start to feel more intense love.”**
- **“During puberty, it’s common to have feelings for people of your same gender and for people of a different gender. Sometimes, that’s part of understanding your sexual orientation. Sometimes, it’s not, and you’ll have feelings that come and go. So you may not know what your orientation is until you’re older – and that’s okay.”** (9 minutes)

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STEP 5: Explain that while love seems like a pretty straightforward term (for example, we say “I love you” all the time; we talk about how we love a TV show, a shirt, etc.), love is a complicated topic and you only just touched on it. Distribute the index cards and ask students to anonymously write any questions they may have about sexual orientation. (5 minutes)

Note to the Teacher: *These index cards should be collected and either answered in the next class as you would with an anonymous question box, put into a handout and shared at the next class session or put into a handout and shared with parents so they have some guidance as to what their kids know and want to know about this topic.*

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The classroom activities and discussion will allow the teacher to assess if all Learning Objectives have been met. In addition, the anonymous questions will, in the aggregate, give an overall impression of students’ knowledge and understanding about sexual orientation.