

Healthy Relationship Information, Adult

Having healthy relationships is important. As an adult, you may have many relationships throughout your life, including relationships with your life partner, children, family members, friends, and people you work with. Keeping these relationships strong and healthy over time can increase your happiness and improve your quality of life. Unhealthy relationships can make life more stressful and have a negative impact on your quality of life. There are many ways to maintain healthy relationships. For example, you can:

- Learn to value and care for yourself and others.
- Choose to spend time with people who help you feel accepted and valued.
- Learn techniques to manage conflict safely.
- Develop communication skills of listening to others and clearly expressing your desires.

What are signs of a healthy relationship?

Qualities of a healthy relationship include:

- Honesty.
- Trust.
- Mutual respect.
- Good communication, both in talking and listening.
- Encouraging interests outside of the relationship, such as doing things with other people.
- Willingness to compromise and settle problems fairly.

What are signs of an unhealthy relationship?

A relationship is unhealthy if the other person demands constant attention or tries to limit your contact with others outside of the relationship. People in unhealthy relationships may feel controlled. They may also feel that the other person is trying to change them. Unhealthy relationships can lead to violence, depression, self-harm, or suicide. Signs of an unhealthy relationship may include:

- Uncomfortable feelings, such as:
 - Fear.
 - Worry (*anxiety*).
 - Sadness.
 - Guilt.
 - Shame.
- Aggressive behavior, such as:
 - Physical abuse.
 - Verbal abuse.
 - Emotional abuse.
- Substance abuse, including drugs or alcohol.
- Lack of respect.
- Jealousy.
- Blaming.

What actions can I take to keep my relationships healthy?

Healthy relationships do not just happen. You may have to make changes in the way you think or act in order to have more healthy relationships. You may need to:

- Practice healthy relationship skills with trusted friends and family members. They can help you develop the communication skills and values that you need to form other healthy relationships.
- Share your problems and concerns with others who can help you learn new skills or better ways to communicate and resolve conflict.

- Talk to your health care provider for other helpful tips.
- Consider the needs of others when trying to get what you want.
- Advocate for yourself by expressing your needs and feelings clearly and respectfully.
- Spend time with people outside of your main (*primary*) relationship.
- Limit your time with people who try to control or intimidate you.



Questions to ask yourself

When beginning a new relationship, ask yourself these questions:

- Are my needs being met?
- Do I feel that my partner listens to me?
- Am I able to listen to the person without judging him or her harshly?
- Do I feel like the other person is controlling me?
- Are we angry at each other often?
- Do we regularly find agreement on issues?
- Do we like each other?
- Is sex pleasurable for both of us?

Where to find more information

- American Psychological Association: apa.org
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline: thehotline.org
- Ask your health care provider or a counselor for other recommended resources on healthy relationships.

Contact a health care provider if:

- You are in a relationship that makes you feel anxious, sad, or fearful.
- You have problems making friends or talking with others.

Get help right away if you:

- You are in an aggressive or abusive relationship.
- You have thoughts of hurting yourself or others.

If you ever feel like you may hurt yourself or others, or have thoughts about taking your own life, get help right away. You can go to your nearest emergency department or call:

- **Your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.).**
- **A suicide crisis helpline, such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. This is open 24 hours a day.**

Summary

- Having healthy relationships is important.
- Qualities of a healthy relationship include honesty, trust, and mutual respect.
- Choose to spend time with people who help you feel accepted and valued.
- Advocate for yourself by expressing your needs and feelings clearly and respectfully.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.