Healthy Relationship Information, Teen

Having healthy relationships is important, especially during your teen years. As a teenager, you are going through many changes. You are starting to think and act more like an adult. You are taking more responsibility. You are doing more things apart from your family. Having healthy relationships can help you:

- Feel comfortable talking with many types of people.
- Learn to value and care for yourself and others.
- Feel accepted and valued by others.
- Learn to manage conflict in order to reach peaceful resolution.

What are signs of a healthy relationship?

Qualities of a healthy relationship include:

- Honesty.
- Trust.
- Mutual respect.
- Good communication. This includes talking and listening.
- Having a partner that encourages connections outside the relationship.
- Being willing to compromise and settle problems fairly.

Having a healthy relationship with your parents or caregivers can help you develop the communication skills and values that you need to form other healthy relationships.

Some teens may not want to discuss romantic topics with parents. Find close friends or adults who you feel comfortable talking with about romantic relationships.

What are signs of an unhealthy relationship?

Relationships during your teen years can be hard. If you are in a relationship in which you feel uncomfortable, it is important to think about whether the relationship is healthy or not. A relationship is unhealthy if the other person demands constant attention or tries to limit your contact with others outside of the relationship. A very unhealthy relationship can lead to violence, depression, self-harm, or suicide.

You may be in a bad relationship if you regularly have uncomfortable feelings, such as:

- Fear.
- Anger.
- Worry (*anxiety*).
- Sadness.
- Guilt.
- Shame or embarrassment.

You may be in a bad relationship if your partner:

- Shows aggressive behavior, which can include:
  - Physical violence, such as hitting, pushing, or biting.
  - Verbal violence, such as threatening, teasing, or bullying.

    - Uncontrolled anger and jealousy.
    - Social aggression, such as avoiding you or freezing you out.
- Uses certain substances, such as drugs or alcohol.
- Does not respect you.
- Demands that you stop spending time with other friends or people of the opposite sex.
- Blames you for problems in the relationship and does not take responsibility for his or her part.

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:

- Be honest about what you want and ask for it.
- Have the courage to ask your partner what he or she wants.
- Practice both talking and listening skills.
- Negotiate toward a positive resolution.
- Stand your ground when others try to control or intimidate you.
- Make it clear to your partner that:
    - You have other friends and activities that you want to connect with.
    - You are not his or her possession.
- Talk to others about your relationships. Share your plans, struggles, and concerns. You may talk to:
    - Your parents, your health care provider, or other family members.
    - School counselors, coaches, and other trusted adults who can help you learn new skills or better ways to communicate and resolve conflict.
    - At times, you may feel quite alone with these issues. In that case, you might decide you want to see a therapist. Do not hesitate to ask your health care provider for the name of someone he or she thinks could help.

Where to find more information

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: hhs.gov
- American Academy of Pediatrics: healthychildren.org
- Youth.gov: youth.gov

Talk with your health care provider or a trusted adult if:

- You feel anxious, sad, or fearful.
- You think you are in an unhealthy relationship.
- You have problems making friends or talking with others.

Get help right away if:

- 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, especially during your teen years. This will help you form healthy relationships as you become an adult.
- Qualities of a healthy relationship include honesty, trust, respect, good communication, and a willingness to compromise.
- A relationship is unhealthy if one person feels the need to change or control the other person.
- Unhealthy relationships can lead to violence, depression, self-harm, or suicide.

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.

Document Released: 04/02/2019 Document Revised: 04/02/2019 Document Reviewed: 04/02/2019
Elsevier Interactive Patient Education © 2020 Elsevier Inc.