

Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships are characterized by respect, sharing and trust. They are based on the belief that both partners are equal and that the power and control in the relationship are equally shared. Some of the characteristics of a healthy relationship are:

Respect - Listening to one another, valuing each other's opinions, and listening in a non-judgmental manner. Respect also involves attempting to understand and affirm the other's emotions.

Trust and support - Supporting each other's goals in life, and respecting each other's right to his/her own feelings, opinions, friends, activities and interest. It is valuing one's partner as an individual.

Honesty and accountability - Communicating openly and truthfully, admitting mistakes or being wrong, acknowledging past use of violence, and accepting responsibility for one's self.

Shared responsibility - Making family/relationship decisions together, mutually agreeing on a distribution of work which is fair to both partners. If parents, the couple shares parental responsibilities and acts as positive, non-violent role models for the children.

Economic partnership - In marriage or cohabitation, making financial decisions together, and making sure both partners benefit from financial arrangements.

Negotiation and fairness - Being willing to compromise, accepting change, and seeking mutually satisfying solutions to conflict.

Non-threatening behavior - Talking and acting in a way that promotes both partners' feelings of safety in the relationship. Both should feel comfortable and safe in expressing him/herself and in engaging in activities.

Is Your Relationship Healthy?

Quiz I :

1. Can you say what you like or admire about your partner?
2. Is your partner glad that you have other friends?
3. Is your partner happy about your accomplishments and ambitions?
4. Does your partner ask for and respect your opinions?
5. Does she/he really listen to you?
6. Can she/he talk about her/his feelings?
7. Does your partner have a good relationship with her/his family?
8. Does she/he have good friends?
9. Does she/he have interests besides you?
10. Does she/he take responsibility for her/his actions and not blame others for her/his failures?
11. Does your partner respect your right to make decisions that affect your own life?
12. Are you and your partner friends? Best friends?

If you answered most of these questions with a **yes**, you probably are not in a relationship that is likely to become abusive. If you answered **no** to some or most of these questions you may be in an abusive relationship, please continue with the next set of questions.

Quiz II :

1. When your partner gets angry does she/he break or throw things?
2. Does your partner lose her/his temper easily?
3. Is your partner jealous of your friends or family?
4. Does your partner expect to be told where you have been when you are not with her/him?
5. Does your partner think you are cheating on her/him if you talk or dance with someone else?
6. Does your partner drink or take drugs almost every day or go on binges?
7. Does she/he ridicule, make fun of you or put you down?
8. Does your partner think there are some situations in which it is okay for a man to hit a woman or a woman to hit a man?
9. Do you like yourself less than usual when you have been with your partner?
10. Do you ever find yourself afraid of your partner?

If you answered **yes** to questions in this group, please be careful and think about your safety.

Basic Rights in a Relationship

Relationships can be complicated, loving, painful, rewarding, healthy, unhealthy, etc. Different people have different beliefs and values regarding what makes a "good" relationship. Healthy relationships are those in which the rights of each individual are valued and respected. They are relationships based on equality, rather than power and control. In a healthy relationship, each partner has rights.

- The right to emotional support.
- The right to be heard by the other and to be responded to with courtesy.
- The right to have your own point of view, even if it differs from your partner's.
- The right to have your feelings and experiences acknowledged as real.
- The right to live free from accusation and blame.
- The right to live free from criticism and judgment.
- The right to live free from emotional and physical threat.
- The right to live free from angry outbursts and rage.
- The right to be respectfully asked, rather than ordered.

Adapted from the University of Northern Colorado and *The Verbally Abusive Relationship* (1992) by Patricia Evans.