

WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

A healthy relationship can mean different things to different people. We all have things that influence the way we look at the world: culture, age, disability, experience, geography to name just a few. However, we believe there are a few universal characteristics to relationships or things that every relationship should have.

Features of a healthy relationship

Respect

Respect is when you have a high regard for someone and who they are. This is a little easier to understand if we consider ways that people show their respect for someone else – by listening, by speaking well of them, by unconditionally supporting them, and by being honest.

Trust

Trust is the ability to have confidence in your partner that they will treat you in a certain way. It is a reliance on another person. In a relationship it is important to be able to trust a partner to treat us well, be supportive and respectful.

Fun and friendship

A healthy relationship definitely has fun too! Finding a partner should also be finding a good friend who you can have a fun time with and enjoy their company.

Compromise

Everyone has disagreements and differences of opinion. That's what keeps life interesting and helps us build skills around empathy and negotiation. People's opinions are often based on values or beliefs which may not change so it is essential to be able to compromise, find a middle ground and agree to disagree.

Support

Having a supportive partner means that you feel you have a shoulder to lean on in good times and bad. Support should not depend on their mood but rather should be unconditional and reliable.

Honesty

Honesty is an absolute requirement of any relationship and should relate to every aspect of your relationship. It is important that you feel you can be truthful and open with your partner about everything, even things that can be difficult to discuss such as sex and intimacy.

Communication

Open and honest communication about everything is part of having a healthy relationship. Being able to be open and express things easily with a partner is something that you get better at the more practice you have. This requires both partners to be understanding, non-judgmental and not overly critical.

Balance

To have a healthy relationship with your partner means also maintaining good relationships with friends, families and interests outside your and your partner. You can offer more to your partner if you continue to develop and be as an individual.



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Features of an unhealthy relationship

Just as there are things a relationship must have, there are also characteristics which should not feature in a relationship:

- **Intimidation**
 - **Fear**
- **Jealousy and possessiveness**
- **Put-downs and name calling**
- **Isolation from family and friends**
 - **Lack of safety**
 - **Violence**
 - **Verbal abuse**

The Abusive Partner Checklist

This checklist is designed to help you identify whether your partner is possibly acting in an abusive way.

- My partner is very jealous, gets jealous easily
- My partner follows me around, checks up on me a lot
- My partner tries to control how I dress or who I spend time with
- My partner yells, calls me names, puts me down
- I hide things that I think would upset or anger my partner (phone numbers, letters, photos)
- I am afraid to say no to sex
- My partner threatens me, or has threatened me
- My partner hits, throws or breaks things when angry
- I am afraid to disagree with my partner
- My partner has pushed, slapped, punched or otherwise hurt me
- I feel like my partner's anger is my fault

If you have answered yes to any of these questions please read the section on this site called 'What is Domestic Violence?'. We would also recommend that you talk to a trusted family member or friend, or contact the Domestic Violence Help line on 1800 656 463 or the Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800.

The 'Abusive Partner Checklist' is an extract from the Scarlateen website. www.scarlateen.com

