

**Healthy Relationships** take time to get right! This resource focuses on developing positive relationships with friends, family members, neighbours & any other people you may encounter in your life. The kit contains interactive activities that encourage children & youth to discuss the key elements that help make a healthy relationship.

### What makes a Healthy Relationship?

**Respect** - Respect each person as an individual. A healthy partnership means learning about the other person & valuing what's important to them.

**Trust** - Means that you feel that you can count on each other & that the other person will be there for you. Trust needs to be earned over time & can be lost with a broken promise.

**Be Honest** about thoughts & feelings. It is the "real me" that our partner wants to get to know.

**Communication** - Is how we show our respect, trust & honesty. It requires listening & sharing thoughts & feelings.

#### Healthy Relationships

You feel good about yourself when you're around the other person.

You do not try to control each other. There is equal amount of give & take.

Communication, Sharing & Trust. You feel safe & trust to share secrets. This requires listening.

You like to spend time together but also enjoy doing things apart.

It's easy to be yourself when you're with them.

You Respect each other's opinion. You listen & try to understand their point of view even if you don't agree.

There is no fear in your relationship.

#### Unhealthy Relationships

You feel sad, angry, scared or worried.

You feel you give more attention than they give to you. You feel controlled.

You do not communicate, share or trust.

You feel pressured to spend time together & feel guilty when apart.

You feel the need to be someone or something that you're not.

You feel there's no respect for you or your opinion. You're not able to disagree.

You feel fear.

Sometimes **respect, communication, trust & honesty** are negatively affected when people use alcohol & drugs. Alcohol &/or drugs may cause arguing, physical, emotional or sexual abuse &/or unprotected sexual activity.

Communication is a key part to building a healthy relationship. The first step is making sure you both want and expect the same things -- being on the same page is very important. The following tips can help you create and maintain a healthy relationship:

- **Speak Up.** In a healthy relationship, if something is bothering you, it's best to talk about it instead of holding it in.
- **Respect Your Partner.** Your partner's wishes and feelings have value. Let your significant other know you are making an effort to keep their ideas in mind. Mutual respect is essential in maintaining healthy relationships.
- **Compromise.** Disagreements are a natural part of healthy relationships, but it's important that you find a way to compromise if you disagree on something. Try to solve conflicts in a fair and rational way.
- **Be Supportive.** Offer reassurance and encouragement to your partner. Also, let your partner know when you need their support. Healthy relationships are about building each other up, not putting each other down.
- **Respect Each Other's Privacy.** Just because you're in a relationship, doesn't mean you have to share everything and constantly be together. Healthy relationships require space.

## Healthy Boundaries

Creating boundaries is a good way to keep your relationship healthy and secure. By setting boundaries together, you can both have a deeper understanding of the type of relationship that you and your partner want. Boundaries are not meant to make you feel trapped or like you're "walking on eggshells." Creating boundaries is not a sign of secrecy or distrust -- it's an expression of what makes you feel comfortable and what you would like or not like to happen within the relationship. Remember, healthy boundaries shouldn't restrict your ability to:

- Go out with your friends without your partner.
- Participate in activities and hobbies you like.
- Not have to share passwords to your email, social media accounts or phone.
- Respect each other's individual likes and needs.

## Healthy Relationship Boosters

Even healthy relationships can use a boost now and then. You may need a boost if you feel disconnected from your partner or like the relationship has gotten stale. If so, find a fun, simple activity you both enjoy, like going on a walk, and talk about the reasons why you want to be in the relationship. Then, keep using healthy behaviors as you continue dating.

## What Isn't a Healthy Relationship?

Relationships that are not healthy are based on power and control, not equality and respect. In the early stages of an abusive relationship, you may not think the unhealthy behaviors are a big deal. However, possessiveness, insults, jealous accusations, yelling, humiliation, pulling hair, pushing or other negative, abusive behaviors, are -- at their root -- exertions of power and control. Remember that abuse is always a choice and you deserve to be respected. There is no excuse for abuse of any kind.

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If you think your relationship is unhealthy, it's important to think about your safety now. Consider these points as you move forward:

- Understand that a person can only change if they want to. You can't force your partner to alter their behavior if they don't believe they're wrong.
- Focus on your own needs. Are you taking care of yourself? Your wellness is always important. Watch your stress levels, take time to be with friends, get enough sleep. If you find that your relationship is draining you, consider ending it.
- Connect with your support systems. Often, abusers try to isolate their partners. Talk to your friends, family members, teachers and others to make sure you're getting the emotional support you need. Remember, our advocates are always ready to talk if you need a listening ear.
- Think about breaking up. Remember that you deserve to feel safe and accepted in your relationship.

Even though you cannot change your partner, you can make changes in your own life to stay safe. Consider leaving your partner before the abuse gets worse. Whether you decide to leave or stay, make sure you use our safety planning tips or take our Healthy Relationship Quiz on [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org).

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# How Can I Communicate Better?



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Part of being in a healthy relationship is having good communication. Use the guidelines below to open up the channels of communication between you and your partner. If you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful using these tips. You know your relationship best. If any of these tips would put you in danger, don't try them.

For healthier communication, try to:

- **Find the Right Time.** If something is bothering you and you would like to have a serious conversation about it, make sure you pick the right time to talk. Don't interrupt your partner when they're watching a sports game, TV show, about to go to sleep or stressed about an upcoming test. Tell your partner you would like to talk later and find a time when you're in the same room and not doing anything important. Don't start serious conversations in public places unless you don't feel safe.
- **Talk Face to Face.** Avoid talking about serious matters or issues in writing. Text messages, letters and emails can be misinterpreted. Talk in person so there aren't any unnecessary miscommunications.
- **Do Not Attack.** Even when we mean well, we can sometimes come across as harsh because of our word choice. Using "you" can sound like you're attacking, which will make your partner defensive and less receptive to your message. Instead, try using "I" or "we." For example, say "I feel like we haven't been as close lately" instead of "You have been distant with me."
- **Be Honest.** Agree to be honest. Sometimes the truth hurts, but it's the key to a healthy relationship. Admit that you aren't always perfect and apologize when you make a mistake instead of making excuses. You will feel better and it will help strengthen your relationship.
- **Check Your Body Language.** Make eye contact when speaking. Sit up and face your partner. Let your partner know you're listening. Show them you really care. Don't take a phone call, text or play a video game when you're talking. Listen and respond.
- **Use the 48 Hour Rule.** If your partner does something that makes you angry, you need to tell them about it. But you don't have to do so right away. If you're still hurt 48 hours later, say something. If not, consider forgetting about it. But remember your partner can't read your mind. If you don't speak up when you're upset, there is no way for them to apologize or change. Once you do mention your hurt feelings and your partner sincerely apologizes, let it go. Don't bring up past issues if they're not relevant.

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## How to Communicate if You Are Angry

- **Stop.** If you get really angry about something, stop, take a step back and breathe. Give yourself time to calm down by watching TV, talking to a friend, playing a video game, taking a walk, listening to some music or whatever helps you relax. Taking a break can keep the situation from getting worse.
- **Think.** After you're no longer upset, think about the situation and why you got so angry. Was it how your partner spoke or something they did? Figure out the real problem then think about how to explain your feelings.
- **Talk.** Finally, talk to your partner and when you do, follow the tips above.
- **Listen.** After you tell your partner how you feel, remember to stop talking and listen to what they have to say. You both deserve the opportunity to express how you feel in a safe and healthy environment.

Communicating isn't always easy. At first, some of these tips may feel unnatural or awkward, but they will help you communicate better and build a healthy relationship.

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You deserve to be in a safe and healthy relationship, whether in person or online. If your partner is digitally abusive, know their behavior is not acceptable and could be illegal. Check out our tips below for staying safe on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, foursquare and others.

- Only post things you want the public to see or know. Once it's online, it's no longer under your control.
- Be protective of your personal information. Your phone numbers and addresses enable people to contact you directly, and things like your birth date, the schools you attended, your employer and photos with landmarks may make it easier for someone to find where you live, hang out or go to school.
- Set boundaries and limits. Tell people not to post personal information, negative comments or check-ins about you on social media. Ask people not to post or tag pictures if you're not comfortable with it.
- You can keep your passwords private -- sharing passwords is not a requirement of being in a relationship.
- Don't do or say anything online you wouldn't in person. It may seem easier to express yourself when you are not face-to-face, but online communication can have real-life negative consequences.

## Abuse or Harassment

- Don't respond to harassing, abusive or inappropriate comments. It won't make the person stop and it could get you in trouble or even put you in danger.
- Keep a record of all harassing messages, posts and comments in case you decide to tell the police or get a restraining order.
- Always report inappropriate behavior to the site administrators.

## Leaving an Abusive Relationship

- If you are leaving an unhealthy relationship, start by blocking your ex on Facebook and other social networking pages. We recommend you don't check-in on foursquare or other location-based sites or apps -- you don't want your ex or their friends tracking your movements.
- Adjust your privacy settings to reduce the amount of information that particular people can see on your page. Privacy settings on sites like Facebook allow the user to control how their information is shared and who has access to it. Remember, registering for some apps require you to change your privacy settings.
- Avoid posting private details on your friend's pages. They may not have appropriate settings and doing so may allow someone to see your movements and location. The same goes for tagging yourself in pictures.

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- Consider what is called a “super-logoff” -- deactivating your Facebook account every time you log off and reactivating it every time you log back on. This way, no one can post on your wall, tag you or see your content when you’re offline, but you still have all of your friends, wall posts, photos, etc. when you log back on.
- While it is inconvenient and may seem extreme, disabling your social networking page entirely may be your best option to stop continued abuse or harassment.

### **Your Friends’ Safety**

If your friend is in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful what you post about them. Pictures, locations, check-ins -- even simple statements can be used to control or hurt them. If you’re unsure of what’s ok to post, get your friend’s permission before you click “Share.”

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# Texting and Sexting



Next to talking one-on-one, texting is currently one of the most instant forms of communication. While texting might be the perfect platform to say a quick “hi,” there are some things to watch out for in a textual relationship with your partner.

## Texting Too Much

If your partner texts too much, it’s not only irritating, but unnecessary. Keeping in touch with your significant other throughout the day can be thoughtful, but constant contact is probably over-doing it. Consider talking to your partner about giving you a little bit of space. Remember, if they’re using texting messaging to monitor everywhere you go, that is a warning sign of abuse.

## Sexting

Does your partner ask for inappropriate pictures of you? Or send them to you? Even if you trust that your partner will be the only one to ever see the pictures, you can never guarantee that they won’t end up on someone else’s phone or online. Seriously consider playing it safe and making a policy of not sending and instantly deleting inappropriate photos. The same goes for webcams and instant messaging, too. Remember you never have to do anything you aren’t comfortable with, no matter how much your partner pressures you.

Sexting can also have legal consequences. Any nude photos or video of someone under 18 could be considered child pornography, which is always illegal. Even if whoever sent the image did so willingly, the recipient can still get in a lot of trouble.

## Reading Someone Else’s Texts

Does your partner ask to read your texts? Or read them behind your back? Healthy relationships are built on trust, not jealousy. You have the right to privacy and the ability to talk to whomever you like. You may want to explain to your partner that you have nothing to hide, but don’t like them going through your phone or deciding who your friends are. If your partner refuses to change, you could be in an unhealthy relationship.

## Threats over Text

Threats over text should be taken seriously -- try not to write them off as angry venting. Keep track of threatening texts and think about talking to someone you trust about what is happening. Being in a violent relationship is dangerous -- don’t go through it alone.

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## What Can I Do?

Whether you feel like your partner is already using their cell phone in an abusive way or you're trying to prevent it, here are tips to keep you safe and healthy:

- Remember, it's ok to turn off your phone. Just be sure your parent or guardian knows how to contact you in an emergency.
- Don't answer calls from unknown or blocked numbers. Your abuser can easily call you from another line if they suspect you are avoiding them.
- Don't respond to hostile, harassing, abusive or inappropriate texts or messages. Responding can encourage the person who sent the message and won't get them to stop. Your messages might also get you in trouble and make it harder to get a restraining order or file a criminal report.
- Save or document troublesome texts as you may need them later for evidence in case you file a criminal report or ask for a restraining order.
- Many phone companies can block up to ten numbers from texting or calling you. Contact your phone company or check their website to see if you can do this on your phone.
- If you are in or coming out of a dangerous relationship, avoid using any form of technology to contact your abuser. It can be dangerous and may be used against you in the future.
- It may seem extreme, but if the abuse and harassment don't stop, changing your phone number may be your best option.

If you are feeling threatened or suffocated by your partner's constant calls or texts, it may be a sign that you are in an unhealthy and potentially abusive relationship. When your partner says or does things that make you afraid, lowers your self-esteem or manipulates you, it is called verbal or emotional abuse. You have the right to be in a safe and healthy relationship free from all types of abuse.

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