

Healthy Relationships

A healthy relationship is one that makes you feel good about yourself and your partner.

You enjoy being together and you can express your true selves.

Relationships are different, but healthy ones have at least five important qualities in common.

The acronym S.H.A.R.E. can help you remember these qualities.

Safety: In a healthy relationship, you feel safe. You don't worry that your partner will harm you physically or emotionally. You can try new things, spend time with other people, or change your mind about something and not worry about your partner being angry.

Honesty: You don't hide anything important from your partner, and can express your thoughts without fear. You can admit to being wrong. You discuss things honestly.

Acceptance: You and your partner accept each other as you are. You appreciate who your partner is and don't try to "fix" him or her.

Respect: You think highly of each other. You respect each other's right to have separate opinions and ideas.

Enjoyment: A healthy relationship is also about enjoying time together. You can play and laugh together. You have fun.

The opposite of a healthy relationship is an abusive relationship. It's about control, fear, and lack of respect. Typically, one partner does most of the controlling while the other feels resentment or fear due to name-calling, blaming, belittling, guilt-tripping, jealous questioning, and outright violence. You may fear being on your own, or you may think it's "better than nothing." In the long run, an abusive relationship does far more damage to your self-esteem than leaving. Talk with someone you trust like a counselor or family member.

Ten Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship*:

1. The partners in the relationship value themselves and each other. They understand each other's differences and they treat each other with respect and courtesy.
2. The partners are equal. They make decisions together. If they have children, they parent together.
3. When the partners disagree, they know that it's okay to talk about their differences. They work it out together. They find ways for both partners to get what they need.
4. The partners listen to and respect each other's viewpoints. They express their feelings and opinions. They do not make hurtful comments about the other person.
5. Each partner takes responsibility for themselves. They do not expect the other person to solve all their problems or always make them happy.
6. The partners each feel comfortable taking time alone if they need it. They feel okay about doing some things separately.
7. There is no fear in their relationship. Healthy relationships are built on love, respect, caring and happiness.
8. The partners do not try to restrict or control each other. They encourage and support each other's growth.
9. Even when the partners are busy, they make time for one another and their relationship.
10. The partners have a circle of people who know them and support them as a couple. They spend time with others who have strong and healthy relationships

Sourced directly (pending permission) from:

http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/documents/familyviolence/doc_opfvb_sheet_Healthy_colour.pdf

Basic Rights in a Relationship:

- 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 emotional and physical threat
- The right to live free from criticism and judgment
- The right to live free from angry outbursts and rage
- The right to be respectfully asked, rather than ordered

Boundaries

Boundaries are important in determining the health of a relationship. Boundaries clarify where you stop and where I begin, which problems belong to you and which problems belong to me. What are boundaries? "Just as homeowners set physical property lines around their land, we need to set mental, physical, emotional and spiritual boundaries for our lives to help us

distinguish what is our responsibility and what is not..." (Dr. Henry Cloud).

Each of us has boundaries, some of which go unspoken, in many areas of our lives. We set boundaries in regard to physical proximity and touch, the words that are acceptable when we are spoken to, honesty, emotional intimacy (such as how much we self-disclose to others). When one of both people in a relationship has difficulty with boundaries, the relationship suffers. The following behaviours indicate a potential problem in setting and enforcing boundaries.

Signs of Unhealthy Boundaries:

- Telling all
- Talking at an intimate level on the first meeting
- Falling in love with a new acquaintance
- Falling in love with anyone who reaches out
- Being overwhelmed by a person (preoccupied thinking about them)
- Acting on the first sexual impulse
- Being sexual for a partner, not yourself
- Going against personal values or rights to please others
- Not noticing when someone invades your boundaries
- Not noticing when someone else displays inappropriate boundaries
- Accepting food, gifts, touch, sex that you don't want
- Touching a person without asking
- Allowing someone to take as much as they can from you
- Letting others describe your reality
- Letting others define you
- Believing others can anticipate your needs
- Expecting others to fulfill your needs automatically
- Falling apart so someone will take care of you

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<http://www.sexualhealthcentresaskatoon.ca/par/relate.htm>

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

Ask a Question at: thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca
