



Find a Health Center

Zip Code or State

Search This Site

Enter Keywords...

Home

Health Topics

Issues & Action

Donate

Resources for Educators

Newsroom

About Us

Home > Health Topics > Relationships > Is Your Relationship Good for You?

Health Topics

- > Abortion
- > Birth Control
- > Body Image
- > Emergency Contraception (Morning After Pill)
- > Men's Sexual Health
- > Tools For Parents
- > Pregnancy
- Relationships
 - Is Your Relationship Good for You?**
 - Relationship Responsibilities
 - Are You Safe in Your Relationship?
- > Sexuality
- > Sexual Orientation & Gender
- > Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) & Safer Sex
- > Teens
- > Women's Health
- > Ask Dr. Cullins

Is Your Relationship Good for You?

QUICK FACTS

Relationships at a Glance

- Everyone deserves to feel happy and safe in their relationships.
- Healthy relationships include six basic qualities — respect, honesty and trust, fairness and equality, and good communication.
- If a relationship has unhealthy qualities, you can work to make it better or choose to end the relationship.
- We can all learn ways to make our relationships healthier.

We all want to be in healthy relationships. But sometimes it is hard to know if a relationship is healthy or unhealthy. Healthy relationships help us feel better about ourselves and about our place in the world. They make us feel happy and safe. Unhealthy relationships make us feel unhappy, insecure, or even unsafe.

We can work to make all our relationships — with family members, friends, romantic partners, and others — as healthy as possible. And we can learn how to tell when a relationship is not healthy and how to improve it or end it. This article focuses on romantic and sexual relationships, but many of the ideas apply to other kinds of relationships.

Highlights

- [What Makes a Relationship Healthy?](#)
- [How Do I Know if I Am in a Healthy Relationship?](#)
- [What Are Some Ways to Develop Healthy Relationships?](#)
- [What Can I Do to Try to Improve My Relationship?](#)
- [What if I Am Not in a Healthy Relationship?](#)

What Makes a Relationship Healthy?

No relationship is perfect all of the time. In a healthy relationship, both people feel good about the relationship most of the time. Sometimes a relationship may need improvement. We can work within our relationships to make them better for us.

Healthy relationships have six basic qualities:

- [respect](#)
- [honesty and trust](#)
- [fairness and equality](#)
- [good communication](#)

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

Find out where you can get services in your area:

Zip Code orState

ISSUES & ACTION

Visit the Issues & Action area for all information on the issues surrounding Abortion, as well as many other topics.

JUST FOR TEENS

Are you a teen looking for more information about Birth Control? [teenwire.com](#) is loaded with great advice written just for you! [More](#)

In an unhealthy relationship, some or all of these qualities may be missing. And because they are missing, the relationship may feel unfair or make us feel unhappy or unsafe.

How Do I Know if I Am in a Healthy Relationship?

It can be hard to know if a relationship is healthy. Many people feel unsure about how healthy their relationship is. In a healthy relationship, people consider each other's needs and make compromises so they both feel happy. One of the best ways to decide if a relationship is healthy is to think about how your partner makes you feel most of the time.

- Does your partner make you feel safe and cared for most of the time? If so, your relationship is probably healthy.
- Does your partner make you feel sad, afraid, or bad about yourself most of the time? If so, your relationship may be unhealthy.

But no relationship is perfect. And sometimes even healthy relationships may have some unhealthy moments. Couples may be able to work together to create a healthier relationship. But, if unhealthy behaviors are a constant part of the relationship, it is likely that the relationship is unhealthy. And if you are in an unhealthy relationship, you might consider ending it.

RESPECT

A healthy relationship should be based on shared respect for each other. People who respect each other are proud of each other. They are accepting and like each other for who they really are. They also listen to and value each other's ideas and opinions.

Ask yourself whether you and your partner respect each other.

- Do you usually listen to each other's ideas and feelings?
- Do you treat each other as friends?
- Are you proud of each other?

If you answered yes to these questions, there is probably respect in your relationship, and that's a good sign for you and the health of your relationship.

Without respect, relationships can be hurtful. Many of us think it takes a slap or a punch to hurt someone. But insults and unkind words hurt just as much. They can destroy our self-esteem — how we feel about ourselves.

Does your partner ...

- make you feel ugly, stupid, or unsure of yourself?
- say you could never make it without him or her?
- call you crazy or stupid?
- ignore or make fun of your feelings or ideas?
- put down your race, family, culture, religion, income, or neighborhood?

If you answered yes to some of these questions, you may feel that your partner doesn't have respect for you.

HONESTY AND TRUST

Honesty and trust are important parts of any healthy relationship. People build trust by being honest with one another. When we trust someone, we feel we have someone we can count on. We also feel safe sharing our thoughts and feelings with each other, which helps to bring us closer. In a healthy relationship, people can tell each other the truth even when it's difficult.

Lack of trust in a relationship can cause problems. It can lead to worry and jealousy. Jealousy is a normal feeling — everyone feels jealous, sometimes. But we all have a choice about how we act on our feelings. Some people can become very controlling when they let jealousy get out of hand. And controlling behavior can break the trust we have in one another. When we trust our partner, we are confident in the relationship, less likely to get jealous, and less likely to overreact to our jealous feelings.

Ask yourself whether you and your partner are honest and trust each other.

- Do you both tell the truth without fear?
- Do you both usually admit when you're wrong?
- Do you understand each other's needs for friends and family?
- Do you feel sure of each other's love?
- Do you have faith in each other's decisions?

If you answered yes to these questions, there is probably honesty and trust in your relationship, and that's a good sign for you and the health of your relationship.

Without honesty and trust, a relationship can cause unhappiness. Partners can doubt the other person's love or commitment. In healthy relationships, people build trust by talking, listening, being honest, respecting each other's feelings, and having fun together.

Does your partner ...

- lie to you to avoid taking responsibility?
- keep secrets?
- say things like, "You wouldn't need other friends if you really loved me"? or "You're having an affair, aren't you"?

If you answered yes to some of these questions, you may be wondering if you and your partner trust each other.

FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY

A healthy relationship is one in which partners treat each other fairly and as equals. No one person controls the relationship. Both people need to feel that their needs are important. Both people need to give and take in the relationship. Both partners should share equally in decision making and be willing to make compromises.

Disagreements happen in all relationships. And it is normal for partners to have different opinions and needs. When partners treat each other fairly, they acknowledge one another's opinions and try to satisfy one another's needs. In healthy relationships, when disagreements happen, people "fight fair." This means listening to another person's point of view and respecting it.

Ask yourself whether you and your partner treat each other fairly and as equals.

- Do you both get to say what you really want?
- Can you both usually expect to have your needs satisfied?
- Do you give and take equally?
- Do you usually make important decisions together?
- Do you both compromise?

If you answered yes to these questions, there is probably fairness and equality in your relationship, and that's a good sign for you and the health of your relationship.

Without fairness and equality, relationships can be hurt by anger. No one is always right — or always wrong. And one partner should not always be in control. In healthy relationships, neither partner is "in charge." In healthy relationships, partners admit their mistakes and can expect fairness, forgiveness, and the ability to make decisions for themselves.

Does your partner ...

- always blame you when something goes wrong?
- try to make you feel guilty about mistakes?
- keep track of your time?
- make you ask permission to do what you want?
- ignore what you want or need?
- force you to do something you don't want to do?
- check up on you all the time at school, work, or home?
- make most of the decisions in your relationship?
- want to control the money?

If you answered yes to some of these questions, you may be wondering if the balance of power is fair and equal in your relationship.

GOOD COMMUNICATION

Good communication is important in any healthy relationship. Communication happens many ways in relationships — in person, on the phone, through e-mail or texts, and through body language, for example.

When people in a healthy relationship communicate with each other, they feel comfortable and safe sharing their thoughts and feelings. They also listen to the thoughts and feelings of the other person. If they are worried or upset, they know the other person will listen to and support them.

Ask yourself whether your relationship is based on good communication.

- Do you usually feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings with each other?
- Do you usually listen to each other without interrupting or judging?
- Do you solve problems and iron out disagreements together?

If you answered yes to these questions, there is probably good communication in your relationship, and that's a good sign for you and the health of your relationship.

Without good communication, there are a lot of misunderstandings. In healthy relationships, partners are open and listen to each other.

Does your partner ...

- refuse to talk about your relationship?
- keep you from saying what's on your mind?
- yell at you?
- refuse to talk about feelings and worries?
- refuse to find time for you?
- give you the silent treatment?

If you answered yes to these questions, you may be wondering if you and your partner are communicating well.

It Goes Both Ways

Often, when people are wondering about their relationships, they start to examine their partner's behavior. But it is also important to look at your own behavior.

Do you ...

- respect your partner?
- trust your partner?
- treat your partner as an equal?
- treat your partner fairly?
- communicate honestly?
- listen to your partner?

Remember, it takes two people to make a relationship work. Thinking about and changing your own behavior is as important as talking with your partner about the changes you want made in the relationship.

What Are Some Ways to Develop Healthy Relationships?

There are many things people can do to build healthy relationships. Remember that, in any relationship, both people must be willing to put in the effort. One person cannot build a healthy relationship alone. Each of us needs the support and commitment of the other person in our relationship.

Here are some suggestions:

- Love yourself. It is important that you are comfortable with

yourself. Know your own strengths and be proud of them. If you are happy with yourself, you will be a happier partner. Share your feelings. If you are upset or concerned, talk about it. Working through difficult situations builds trust and helps make relationships even stronger.

- Don't assume you know what someone else is thinking or feeling. If you want to know what is on your partner's mind — ask. Make sure you are ready to hear the answer.
- Spend time on your own. Sometimes people think a healthy relationship means spending all your time together. It is actually healthier for people to spend time with different people than with just one person. That way they can develop their own interests and talents and grow as individuals.
- Communicate openly and honestly about sex. This is the only way your partner will really know what is comfortable for you and what gives you pleasure.
- Take care of your sexual health. In a healthy relationship, both partners want to protect their sexual health. Getting checkups for STDs and practicing safer sex are important. Make an appointment at your local Planned Parenthood health center to get birth control, tests and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and information about your sexual health.

What Can I Do to Try to Improve My Relationship?

If you feel that your relationship is unhealthy, or has some unhealthy parts, you can talk with your partner about your concerns. It is important that you feel safe having this conversation.

When you talk, be clear about what your concerns are. Good communication is an important part of problem solving in relationships. When we are honest about our feelings and concerns, it gives others a chance to work with us to make the relationship better.

Ending a Relationship

People choose to end relationships for many reasons.

- Your relationship may make you uncomfortable or unhappy.

- You may not feel ready to be in a relationship.

- You may have to end a good relationship because circumstances make the relationship too difficult — for example, if one person has to move far away from the other.

If you decide to end a relationship, you might want to read some tips for ending it.

What if I Am Not in a Healthy Relationship?

In healthy relationships, there are sometimes unhealthy behaviors that can be improved. And partners can talk about them and work on them. But sometimes relationships are unhealthy and cannot be fixed. And sometimes relationships are abusive.

If you are wondering what to do about your relationship, you can

- Talk with your family.
- Talk with someone in a relationship you admire.
- Talk with trusted friends or others in a "peer" group.
- Try couples counseling.

Staff at your local [Planned Parenthood health center](#), your local school, or religious or community center can help you find the support you need in dealing with your relationship.

Published: 04.25.08 | Updated: 04.25.08

© 2009 Planned Parenthood® Federation of America, Inc. Use of this site signifies your agreement to our [privacy policy](#) and [terms of use](#).

