



Healthy Dating Relationships



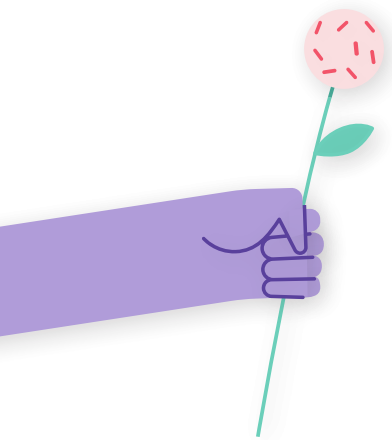
Respect is the foundation of healthy relationships

Healthy dating relationships

(whether it's online, over the phone, or in-person) are characterized by respect, safety, boundaries/autonomy, trust, caring, communication, and fun. These are all very important aspects of healthy relationships and respect is at the foundation of most of them.



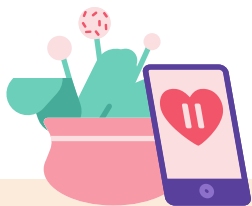
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emotions, desires,
and needs have value
– just like yours



Respect

The core of healthy relationships is respect. Romantic relationships can be difficult to manage, as our partners often don't share the exact same beliefs, emotionality, or desires. However, your partner's feelings, emotions, desires, and needs have value – just like yours. There is a reason for the cliché: “treat others how you'd like to be treated”, because it is a direct and simple way to understand healthy interaction. When we respect our partners, and they respect us, we are already on track for many aspects of a healthy relationship. We should be mindful and considerate of boundaries, make efforts to constructively communicate, be honest with each other, and have compassion for each other's feelings and needs. Without respect, you cannot have a healthy relationship.

you don't have to do anything that puts you in danger, causes you harm, or makes you feel unsafe



Safety

A vital component of a healthy dating relationship is the experience of being and feeling safe. This means that you and your partner feel physically safe (e.g. you are protected from physical danger and harm) and psychologically safe (e.g. you are protected from emotional or psychological abuse). There are many ways that harm can occur in relationships, such as through physical aggression, constant insults and belittling, unwanted sexual contact, and controlling behaviour. Safety includes online spaces, and you should take care to protect sensitive personal information such as passwords and your home address.

Remember that your safety is paramount: you don't have to do anything that puts you in danger, causes you harm, or makes you feel unsafe. If you are currently or have been feeling unsafe or in danger, please contact emergency services (Dial 911) or access the resources provided at the end of this guide.



Take your time getting to know someone online before meeting in person

Meeting People Online

Online platforms are a convenient way to connect with new people. If you are exploring online dating to connect with potential partners, remember to share carefully. When creating an online dating profile, avoid including personal details or identifying information like your last name, financial information, home address, phone number or place of work.

Take your time getting to know someone online before meeting in person for the first time, this will help you to better spot red flags in the event someone is misrepresenting themselves or their intentions. If the time comes when you would like to meet an online connection in person, before you meet up, be sure to tell a trusted friend or family member your plans, meet and stay in public, make sure your mobile phone is charged and arrange for your own transportation. Remember, if you ever feel pressured or uncomfortable, you can always end the date or cancel your plans. Your safety and security should be your first priority.

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saying “no” to things
that make us
uncomfortable



Boundaries & Autonomy

Autonomy is freedom from external control or influence, and it is an essential part of any relationship. When we are autonomous, we care for ourselves and set boundaries with the people in our lives. Everyone has the right to make decisions relating to ourselves which includes things like leaving the relationship for any reason, control over own health and bodies, and saying “no” to things that make us uncomfortable. Nobody has a right to control your life, force you to do something for them, or touch you without consent. When we set boundaries, they are not to limit each other, but to establish what makes both partners feel comfortable in a relationship. For instance, it is healthy to spend time apart from a partner and to have one’s own personal interests and hobbies. Boundaries are not the same as restrictions, as they are based on mutual trust and understanding. This is because boundaries involve respecting a partner’s autonomy (e.g. not touching partner without consent), whereas restrictions involve limiting someone else (e.g. telling partner not to text anyone else). Be sure to be aware of boundaries in online interactions as well. Pressuring you to meet up in person or send explicit media when you’re uncomfortable is never okay.

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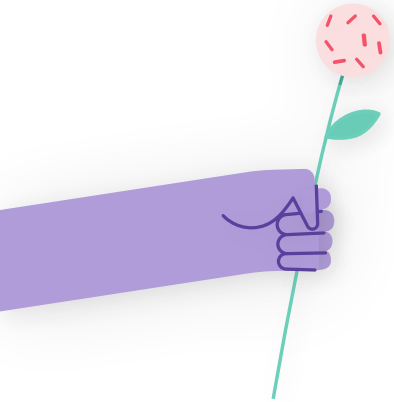
Trust takes
time to develop,
especially online

Trust

When we feel safe and respected in relationships, we develop trust in one another. Trust is about knowing our partners are honest and genuinely care about us as individuals. It also involves giving and receiving the benefit of the doubt. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't question things in our relationships or express when we don't agree with something. Trust is based on a history of respect, safety, and honesty – it is something that is both gained and lost. You can't have a fully-functioning healthy relationship without establishing trust both ways. Trust takes time to develop, especially online, and it is not something that needs to be “proven”. Remember, your safety and well-being come first.

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showing that
the other person
is important, valued,
and appreciated

Caring

Caring is what makes relationships contribute to our well-being. Caring encompasses a wide range of behaviours in a relationship such as: showing that the other person is important, valued, and appreciated; communicating with sensitivity, including and welcoming others, listening to others with interest and openness; supporting the other through their feelings, empathizing, helping, complementing, and expressing affection verbally and nonverbally.



Healthy communication consists of explaining problems honestly in a respectful, tactful, and caring manner.



Communication & Problem Solving

Open communication that is non-violent and constructive is critical to healthy relationships. We need to feel comfortable communicating honestly and forthrightly in relationships. It is important to be able to share our thoughts, feelings, and desires with our partners and for them to do the same. Everyone gets upset or frustrated in relationships at times, but it is essential that conflicts are spoken about and that efforts are made to resolve them non-violently. Healthy communication consists of explaining problems honestly in a respectful, tactful, and caring manner. This is the difference between assertive communication which is direct but constructive, versus aggressive communication which is also direct but is hostile and destructive. Take note of how your partner talks to you online and in person. You should determine if how he or she communicates is demeaning, aggressive, or manipulative.

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Healthy relationships
should make us feel
happy and good
about ourselves.

Fun

Finally, fun is the essential ingredient that creates a sense of mutual delight, happiness, and togetherness in a relationship. Fun is a part of both online and in-person interaction and comes from shared activities and interests that both partners enjoy, as well as the acts of romance between partners. Healthy relationships should make us feel happy, desired, and valued, and this enables us to feel good about ourselves. That is not to say that we can expect to feel happy all the time in a relationship, but we need to nurture that element of fun and shared enjoyment.

Dating Relationship CHECK-UP

Please think about your current dating relationship (whether it's online, over the phone, or in-person) when answering "yes" or "no" to these questions.

If you answer yes to any of these questions, your relationship may be showing signs of unhealthy or abusive behaviours. Remember that small negative acts can grow worse over time. Although no relationship is perfect, abusive behaviours in relationships are harmful to mental health and safety. If you are currently or have been feeling unsafe, access the resources provided at the end of this guide.



YES	NO	My partner demands to know where I am at all times.
YES	NO	My partner threatens to hurt me or them when we don't agree.
YES	NO	My partner repeatedly pressures me to send sexual pictures, videos, or messages.
YES	NO	My partner tells me who I am allowed or not allowed to see.
YES	NO	My partner shares my messages, pictures, or other media intended to be private without my consent.
YES	NO	My partner tells me what to wear or how to look.
YES	NO	My partner demands to check my phone, social media accounts, or email.
YES	NO	My partner puts me down or criticizes me.
YES	NO	My partner texts, calls, or messages me online excessively.
YES	NO	My partner demands that I give them personal information (e.g. address, credit card information, etc.).

List of Resources



EMERGENCY SERVICES

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 or your local police.

SHELTERSAFE

If you are experiencing abuse, help is available any time of day or night.
www.sheltersafe.ca

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