

Healthy relationships vs. unhealthy relationships

 [kidshelpphone.ca/article/healthy-relationships-vs-unhealthy-relationships](https://www.kidshelpphone.ca/article/healthy-relationships-vs-unhealthy-relationships)

In healthy relationships, people can feel safe, respected and accepted for who they are. In unhealthy relationships, people may feel anxious, confused, uncertain and even unsafe. Knowing these differences can help you make choices about who you date and for how long.

Here are some signs of a healthy relationship:

- **Being yourself:** You feel comfortable around the person you're dating. Changing yourself to please someone else won't work in the long run and can frustrate your friends and family, so it's important to be yourself.
- **Honesty:** you feel comfortable talking about things in the relationship, including problems or concerns.
- **Good communication:** you discuss things that are important to you or your relationship. You ask each other what you're thinking and feeling and you listen to each other.
- **Respect:** you respect and support each other, and listen to each other's concerns. It's important to treat yourself with respect and say no to things that make you uncomfortable.
- **Feeling safe:** if you feel threatened in any way, you're not in a healthy relationship. Feeling safe is both emotional and physical. It's important to know that your partner won't try to hurt your feelings or your body.
- **Trust:** trust is about being able to count on someone. It's about believing that someone will be honest with you and follow through on their promises. When you trust someone, you know that they'll support you and look out for you. You have each other's best interests at heart.
- **Equality:** equality keeps relationships safe and fair. For example, being equal in a relationship means sharing the power, not bossing each other around. Equality can also mean sharing the effort. If you text or call your partner often, but they don't seem to have time for you, your relationship may be unequal.
- **Support:** support is about feeling cared for and respected. In healthy relationships, people listen to each other, help out with problems and show support by attending important events.

Dealing with arguments

It's healthy to argue from time to time. Disagreeing gives you a chance to explore different perspectives and helps you express your feelings. It's a problem if you're fighting all of the time or if you say cruel things. It's important to remember that physical fighting (punching, hitting, etc.) is never OK.

Here are some tips for fighting fair:

- **Stay calm:** try to speak calmly, no matter how upset you are.
- **Don't accuse:** even if you've been wronged, it's better to explain how you feel than to blame or accuse the other person. For example, it's better to say, "I felt hurt and embarrassed when you did that," than "You think I'm an idiot."
- **Address the problem:** discuss what you'd like to change. Aim for a solution rather than winning the argument.
- **Step back:** when tempers are hot, take a break. Suggest that you talk about it in a day or two, after you've both had time to cool off and think.

Fighting fair online

If you're fighting online, it's still important to fight fair. It's important to:

- **Be respectful:** don't post hurtful comments on someone else's social media or do other things that could cause harm.
- **Think before you press send:** give yourself some time to cool off before you send an online message. If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online.

Unhealthy relationships

While it's common to fight or bicker in most relationships, sometimes relationships can be toxic and leave a person feeling insecure or scared.

Here are some signs of an unhealthy relationship:

- **Physical abuse:** your partner pushes you, hits you or destroys your things.
- **Control:** your partner tells you what to do, what to wear or who to hang out with. They constantly check up on you or use threats (for example, to harm you or themselves) to make you do things.
- **Humiliation:** your partner calls you names, puts you down or makes you feel bad in front of others.
- **Unpredictability:** your partner gets angry easily and you don't know what will set them off. You feel like you're walking on eggshells.
- **Pressure:** your partner pushes you to do things you don't want to do or aren't ready for, including sex or using drugs and alcohol. They don't take "no" for an answer and they use threats or ultimatums.

Dating Violence

Any form of violence is not a normal part of a healthy relationship. Dating violence includes physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse directed toward a dating partner. It exists on a continuum, ranging from minor instances to severe acts of violence. Forms of dating violence include:

- **Emotional violence:** Threats, insults, criticizing, degrading, stalking, making someone feel guilty and silent treatment are all forms of emotional violence.
- **Physical violence:** This includes pushing, shoving, scratching, kicking, choking, burning and assaulting someone with a weapon.
- **Sexual violence:** Rape and sexual assault are forms of sexual violence. **Remember, dating someone doesn't mean you have to be sexual with them, even if you have been before. Consent is required, every time.**

Talking about dating violence and sexual assault can be difficult, embarrassing and painful. If you don't feel that you can talk to your parents try telling another safe adult or talk to one of Kids Help Phone's counsellors at 1-800-668-6868.

Things you should know about dating violence:

- You don't owe a person anything – even if they paid for the date or you kissed them and they wanted to continue, they can't force you to do something you don't want to do.

- It's not true that if you like/love a person you have to sleep with them – if they respect and like you, they will listen to you and respect your decisions.

What you can do if you're experiencing dating violence:

- If you have been the victim of dating violence, it's important to get support and medical assistance if you have been physically or sexually assaulted.
- Being sexually assaulted is a terrifying and traumatic experience. It can be helpful to share your feelings with someone you trust and feel safe with, like a parent, relative or friend.