



## What's Love Got to Do with it? A Guide to Healthy Relationships

### What is a Healthy Relationship?

A healthy relationship is one that lets you be yourself and makes you feel good. Any relationship whether it is a friendship or something more serious, should make you feel good. However, all relationships are not perfect all of the time. Disagreements and different points of view are a normal part of being in a relationship. But a relationship where all parties are always fighting is not healthy for anyone involved. Anyone who is involved in a relationship with another person has potential to be abused.

### What Can I Do to Build Strong, Healthy Relationships?

Healthy relationships do not just happen; they are built between people. There are some things that everyone can do to develop healthy relationships, such as:

- Liking yourself. This is the first step to a fulfilling relationship. People who like themselves can easily make room in their lives for others.
  - Be honest with your partner(s).
  - Spend time apart and follow your own interests.
  - Treat your partner(s) as you would like to be treated
- Do not look to your partner(s) as the sole provider of your happiness. It is not your partner(s)'s responsibility to take the place of your friends, family, and social entertainment.
- Learn good communication skills. Be clear about what you do and do not want, and what you think is acceptable behaviour for you and your partner(s).

### What is an Unhealthy Relationship?

Unhealthy relationships can come in many forms, the most serious of these being abusive relationships.

#### **There are several kinds of abuse:**

- **Emotional** - using guilt, love, jealousy, or other feelings to get you to do things that you would not normally want to do

- **Physical** - threatening to hurt, or actually hurting your body.
- **Sexual** - touching your body or forcing to you to do things with your body that you are not comfortable doing.
- **Spiritual** - putting down your beliefs about God or religion.
- **Financial** - buying gifts or spending money outside of what they can afford, or, taking your money, credit cards, etc. without your permission.

These kinds of abuse are not the only elements in unhealthy relationships, and they are not the only types of abuse that exist. Racism, homophobia, and sexism are all considered abuse.

### **What Are Some Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship?**

#### **People who are abusive may do some of the following:**

- Be very jealous and act like they own their partner(s).
  - Control/try to control their partner(s).
  - Always wants to be with their partner(s).
- Explode whenever they are angry, and then makes excuses for their behaviour.
- Do not allow their partner(s) to express opinions and thoughts or punishes them for doing so.

#### **People who are in an unhealthy relationship may:**

- Be withdrawn or depressed.
- Give into their partner all the time or will not express their own opinions.
  - Often has unexplained or questionable bruises or other injuries.
    - Make excuses for partner(s)'s behavior.
    - Stop hanging out with family and friends.
    - Be scared to end the relationship.
    - Be afraid of making mistakes.

### **If You Choose to End an Unhealthy Relationship:**

Ending an abusive relationship is a very difficult and brave thing to do. If you have made the decision to end your relationship, here are some tips that can help you to stay safe:

- Be aware of your partner(s)'s warning signs. Try to leave before there is a big blow up.
  - Do not be alone with your partner(s).
  - Do not become isolated from family and friends.
  - Have a plan of who to contact in case you are scared or need help.
- Believe that you have the power to leave this relationship and that you deserve to be happy, healthy, and safe.

### **I Think That a Young Person I Care About is in an Unhealthy Relationship. How Can I Help?**

Even young people are victims of abuse in their relationships. In fact, some studies have shown that young people are at a higher risk for being involved in an abusive relationship than people over the age of 20. If a youth that you care about is in an unhealthy relationship, there are a few things you can do to help:

- Keep the lines of communication open.
- Assure the youth that you will always be there...whenever they are ready to talk.
- Remember, young people feel love as strong and as deep as adults. Try not to marginalize a young person's feelings, or to put down the relationship.
  - Try not to put the abusive partner(s) down in front of the young person.
  - Offer suggestions of places the victim can go for help.
- Talk to the abusive partner(s) about anger management and where they can go for help.
- Talk to the youth about self-esteem and abuse. Remind them that abuse is not the fault of the victim.

Lastly, **do not judge**.

It is difficult for anyone who is in an unhealthy relationship to seek help. You cannot force an individual to leave a relationship or to get help, but you can offer a safe place to turn when the youth is ready.

## **Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!**

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**Location:**

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

**Hours:**

Monday: 9am – 4:30pm  
Tuesday: 9am – 4:30pm  
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Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm  
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**Revised: July 2020**

\*\*Information used to develop this pamphlet was obtained from the “Making Waves: Making a Difference. A resource book for teachers and guidance counsellors on teen dating violence”, developed in New Brunswick, Canada and from “Dating Violence: The Reality” developed by the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, Inc. located in St. John's, NL.