

# HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Healthy social connections play an important role in our overall well-being and quality of life.<sup>1</sup> Learning about healthy relationships can help us develop decision-making and relationship-building skills. Fostering healthy relationships with friends, family, schoolmates, teachers, and others can have a positive effect on our sense of self, emotional development, and future relationships.<sup>2</sup>

## START WITH SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion is "the process of turning compassion inward. We are kind and understanding rather than harshly self-critical when we fail, make mistakes, or feel inadequate. We give ourselves support and encouragement rather than being cold and judgmental when challenges and difficulty arise in our lives."<sup>3</sup>

Before we can fully build a healthy relationship with others, it's helpful to start by creating a positive relationship with ourselves. How can we practice self-compassion? Awareness, connection, and kindness are three elements to keep in mind when caring for yourself:<sup>4</sup>

### 1 AWARENESS

Check-in with yourself when you experience something difficult. Can you identify the source of the problem? Treat yourself like you would a close friend and ask yourself "how are you feeling?". See if you can name your emotions or physical feelings, such as "sad", "nervous", or "shaky"?

### 2 CONNECTION

You are not alone. Remember that there are many other people out there who have experienced similar feelings, but under different circumstances. Sharing how you feel is important. You can reach out to someone you trust, or listen to the stories of others who've felt the way you feel.

### 3 KINDNESS

How would you help a friend in a similar situation? Ask yourself "what do I need to support me right now?" – Try doing something calming like going for a walk, taking deep breaths, or meditating. Give yourself encouragement, words of kindness, and reassurance as you would a good friend.

## WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

Self-compassion strategies can build greater self-clarity,<sup>5</sup> which will ultimately contribute to creating healthier relationships with others. However, the unfortunate reality is that relationships are not always healthy. All relationships exist on a spectrum ranging from healthy to abusive.<sup>6</sup> It's critical to know the warning signs and be able to identify healthy, unhealthy, and abusive behavior in relationships.



## HEALTHY

A healthy relationships means both you and your partner are:

- Communicating
- Respectful
- Trusting
- Honest
- Equal
- Enjoying personal time away from each other
- Making mutual choices
- Economic/financial partners

## UNHEALTHY

You may be in an unhealthy relationship if your partner is:

- Not communicating
- Disrespectful
- Not Trusting
- Dishonest
- Trying to take control
- Only spending time together
- Pressured into activities
- Unequal economically/financially

## ABUSIVE

Abuse is occurring in a relationship when one partner is:

- Communicating in a hurtful or threatening way
- Mistreating
- Accusing the other of cheating when it's untrue
- Denying their actions are abusive
- Controlling
- Isolating their partner from others

2

Common characteristics of a healthy relationship include:

- Mutual respect — you treat your partner as an equal and value their time and interests.
- Good communication — you “free your feels” openly, you’re a good listener, and you can have healthy disagreements. In disagreements, both partners avoid disrespectful language, belittling, insults, and shaming.
- Healthy boundaries – partners spend time away from each other and participate in their own personal, enjoyable activities.<sup>8</sup>

**So, what does it look like when a relationship is becoming unhealthy, or even abusive? A few indications or warning signs of abuse from your partner include:<sup>2</sup>**

- ✓ Checking your phone, email, or social media accounts without your permission.
- ✓ Extreme jealousy or insecurity.
- ✓ Possessiveness or controlling behavior.
- ✓ Putting you down frequently, especially in front of others.
- ✓ Explosive outbursts, temper, or mood swings.
- ✓ Pressuring you or forcing you to have sex.
- ✓ Isolating you from friends or family (physically, financially, or emotionally).
- ✓ Any form of physical harm.

*Retrieved from loveisrespect.org*

## IMMEDIATE SUPPORT

Remember that you are not to blame for any type of relationship abuse or violence. If you do not feel safe, or if you begin to identify any warning signs of an abusive relationship, take immediate action to ensure your safety. Reach out for help anonymously or to those you trust.

- Teens can anonymously discuss their situation with a dating violence expert at the National Teen Dating Violence Hotline in several ways:
  - **Call: 1-866-331-9474**
  - **Text: “loveis” to 22522**
  - **Chat: online at [LoveisRespect.org](http://LoveisRespect.org)**
- Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233) or at [www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)
- Find and contact your local, Georgia domestic violence shelter using [www.gcadv.org/get-help/find-a-domestic-violence-center-near-you/](http://www.gcadv.org/get-help/find-a-domestic-violence-center-near-you/)



**SCAN FOR LOCAL  
& ADDITIONAL  
RESOURCES, AND  
DATA SOURCES**



[WWW.FREEYOURFEELS.ORG](http://WWW.FREEYOURFEELS.ORG)