



BUILDING Healthy Relationships

Yes, that includes
dating relationships!

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our goal is **healthy** children

Building Healthy Relationships

Yes, that includes dating relationships!



There are all kinds of relationships. We have relationships with...

- people we know a little
- close friends, best friends
- family members
- people we date or have crushes on

The goal of this booklet is to help youth (like you) learn about what a healthy dating relationship looks like.

Many of the qualities that make a good friendship are also important for a healthy dating relationship. This booklet will begin by looking at what **all** relationships need to be healthy. You can use this information to build better friendships and dating relationships now, and in the future.

The second part of this booklet will take a closer look at what a healthy **dating** relationship looks like.

What makes a great relationship?



You might be having fun with friends. Or you might be thinking about what it would be like to date the person you have a crush on. Either way, there is a lot to learn about relationships!

On the following pages is a list of some important ingredients for a healthy relationship. To help you think about what is important to you in a relationship, put these ingredients in order, from most to least important. Your top choice will be #1. Your second choice will be #2, and so on. What you think is most important might be different from what your friends think, and it might be different for you depending on what kind of relationship you are thinking about (e.g., a friend versus someone you're dating).

This is not a test! There are no right or wrong answers.

Recipe for a Healthy Relationship

Healthy Relationship Ingredients

Importance
Level (1-9)

Being true to yourself
Communication
Respect
Trust
Support
Fun
Equality
Independence
Boundaries

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This relationship may contain:

Being true to yourself: Both of you know your likes/dislikes and strengths/weaknesses.

Communication: Both of you are honest about what you think and feel, and you listen to each other.

Respect: Both of you like each other for who you are and feel free to be yourselves around each other.

Trust: Both of you want the best for each other and are honest and dependable.

Support: You build each other up and are there for each other.

Fun: You laugh together and enjoy hanging out with each other.

Equality: Both of you make decisions that are right for yourselves and feel important and liked for who you are.

Independence: Both of you are able to spend time apart and be okay with it. Each of you has your own friends and activities.

Boundaries: Both of you know what you want/don't want and your limits (what lines you don't want to cross).

Healthy Relationships start with YOU

YOU are an important part of any relationship and it's important to like yourself. Liking yourself will help you to develop strong and healthy relationships with others.

Liking yourself starts by knowing who you are.

- What do you enjoy doing?
- What are your likes and dislikes?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?



Answering the questions on the previous page will help you to know the kinds of people you will get along with.



Spend time doing things that interest you – like music, sports, cultural events, and community events. Then you will meet people with similar interests, and you can have fun doing these things together!



Pay attention to how you are around other people (e.g., how you feel and act when you are around them). There are people in your life that will bring out the best in you. Choose to hang out with these people! Choose NOT to hang out with people who bring you down (e.g., make you feel sad, try to make you do things you don't want to do).

Healthy Relationships are about COMMUNICATION

Good Communication is About TALKING and LISTENING

- Be open and honest about what you are thinking and feeling. Tell the truth. Don't expect people to read your mind...you have to let them know what's going on.
- Show those close to you that they are important by really listening to what they are saying (e.g., use eye contact, think about what they have said before responding).
- Be calm even when you don't think the same way as someone else.

Did you know?

- Learning how to communicate better with the people who matter to you will make your relationships with them stronger.
- Words aren't the only way to let someone know how you feel. Check your **body language**. Things like how you hold your arms (if they are stiff and crossed in front of chest or relaxed and to the side) and where you are looking (right at the person or away from them) can give **clues** about your real thoughts and feelings.



- It is normal to sometimes feel hurt or angry with someone. But remember, even if you are upset with someone, it's important that both people are allowed to share their side of the story, including how they feel. If you feel like you cannot do this calmly, you may need to take a break and come back to the conversation after you have had some time to think it through.

Text and Online Communication¹

- Be clear! Use Emojis 😊 :) ☹ :(or explain how you are saying something: *smiling* or (sarcasm!).
- Wait a minute before you post/send. If you're feeling angry or hurt, it is a good idea to wait to post and send messages until you are feeling calmer. Remember that forwarding hurtful images or gossip is considered bullying.
- If you are upset or unsure about something someone sent you, ask them what they meant. Talk to them on the phone or face-to-face if possible. Tell them how their message made you feel.



¹The information on this page was adapted with permission from Teen Talk, a website from the Sexuality Education Resource Centre Manitoba. See the full website at teentalk.ca.

Let's Practice Good Communication

Part of being a good communicator is being **ASSERTIVE**. This means telling someone confidently what you think, feel, and want.

- Look right at the person and speak with a firm voice.
- Being assertive is especially important when someone has hurt you, or when someone is trying to make you do something you do not want to do. This will help others learn what you want and how you expect to be treated.

Being assertive doesn't mean being aggressive.

- Being assertive means clearly telling someone what you think, while still respecting their feelings.
- Being aggressive means demanding your way, while ignoring the other person's feelings.

Try this! Speak assertively with someone who is important to you. Then think about how this worked for you. How did you feel?



If you want to have a serious conversation about something that is bothering you, pick the right time and place. Don't start serious conversations when you only have a few minutes to talk or when you're in the middle of a crowd. Pick a quiet place to talk and give yourself some time so you can fully express your thoughts and feelings.



Learning how to communicate assertively isn't always easy. When you first start practicing, it can feel awkward, but keep it up. It will get easier over time and will help you build better and healthier relationships.

Healthy Relationships are about RESPECT

Respect is about liking people for who they are (e.g., their abilities, their personality, what they do).

- Learn about the other person and show that their feelings, thoughts, and beliefs are important.
- You should encourage other people to be themselves, and you should feel free to be yourself.
- You should feel good about who you are when you're around the other person. This means that you bring out the best in each other.

The word "RESPECT" is written in a large, bold, blue, comic-style font with a black outline. It is set against a green splatter background with a pattern of white dots. The overall design is vibrant and energetic, with splashes of blue and green in the upper right corner of the page.



Did you know?

- You can't change someone else. That's why it's important to know yourself so you have a good idea of who you want to spend time with.
- Respect means being brave and saying sorry when you've hurt someone. Saying sorry (and really meaning it) will help you feel better about yourself. It's also important to learn from your mistakes so that you don't keep making the same ones again and again.

Healthy Relationships are about TRUST

In a trusting relationship, both people ...

- want the best for each other
- are able to count on each other to be there for one another
- give each other the space they need (like having their own friends and activities)
- are honest with each other (say what they think and feel)
- keep private information private. What is talked about in private should remain private unless someone is in trouble. If you feel like someone is in trouble and needs help, you should talk to a trusted adult who can help. You can also call the Kids Help Phone.² You should not discuss it with other friends.

Did you know?

- Trust is earned over time. Trust can also be lost by things like breaking a promise or lying. Trust takes time to rebuild.



How can I get back the trust we once had?³

- If you hurt someone, it's important to start by saying sorry. The best time to say sorry is as soon as you notice you've done something wrong.
- Fess up – admit that you've done something wrong.
- Don't make excuses. Say exactly what you've done wrong.
- Show the person that you actually feel sorry. For example, you could say, "I'm really sorry for hurting your feelings. It was wrong of me to do that, and I won't do it again."
- If possible, make it up to the person (e.g., if you are always late, start showing up on time; if you have said hurtful things, stop saying these things).
- Ask, "What else can I do?"



²Kids Help Phone provides free online and telephone counselling to children and youth. You can chat with a counsellor online at www.kidshelpphone.ca or call 1-800-668-6868.

³The information on this page was adapted with permission from the University of Saskatchewan's Student Wellness Centre.

Healthy Relationships are about **SUPPORT**

Healthy relationships are about encouraging one another and building each other up through good times and bad.

Support is about:

- being able to count on each other in times of need
- celebrating each other's successes

Think about the people close to you. Who are your best supporters? How does it feel to have these people in your corner? Who do you cheer for in life?

Did you know?

- Supporting people doesn't just mean being a shoulder to cry on. It also means being a fan or cheerleader when they are doing something that's important to them.



Healthy Relationships are about **HAVING FUN!**

Hang out and have fun!

- Laugh together.
- Be goofy together.
- Do activities that you enjoy doing together.

Did you know?

- Relationships are not always easy. Sometimes they are hard work. But there should be more good times than bad. If you think you are in an unhealthy relationship, talk to an adult you trust, like a parent or a school counsellor. You can also call the Kids Help Phone.⁴



⁴Kids Help Phone provides free online and telephone counselling to children and youth. You can chat with a counsellor online at www.kidshelpphone.ca or call 1-800-668-6868.

- Relationships aren't usually all good or all bad. If one part of a relationship is unhealthy, it doesn't mean the whole relationship is unhealthy. Sometimes it's possible to work together to make the relationship better.
- Other times, it might not be as easy to work things out. Remember that you are only responsible for you. You cannot force the other person to work on your relationship, and you cannot force another person to change.
- In some situations, it might be best to take a step back and think about whether the person you're friends with or are dating is bringing out the best or worst in you. Everyone wants happy and healthy relationships. If the person is making you feel bad, is bringing out the worst in you, and isn't willing to work on your relationship, it might be best to end it.



Let's talk about dating



Not everyone your age is dating and that's completely normal. Even if you aren't dating, it's important to know what a healthy dating relationship looks like.

If you know what a healthy dating relationship looks like, you will be less likely to be involved in harmful relationships, now and in the future.

Remember – just like in any relationship, a healthy dating relationship starts with **you**. Get to **know yourself**. What do you like to do? What are you interested in? And just like in a good friendship, **communication**, **respect**, **trust**, **support**, and **having fun** are important qualities to have in a dating relationship.

Next up are a few more things to think about when deciding to date someone you like!

***Note:**

Some people may define 'dating' differently than others. When talking about a dating relationship in this booklet, it means any kind of relationship with a person in a romantic way (e.g., someone you have a crush on or flirt with, someone you go out with once or twice, someone you're in a long-term dating relationship with, and so on).



Be friends

The person you date should treat you like a real friend and like you for who you are. Before you decide to date, try being friends...don't feel pressured to hurry up and start a serious relationship.



A healthy dating relationship takes work

*Dating relationships are **not**:*

- always easy
- perfect like a fairy tale
- what you might see on TV or in the movies



Watch how they act

Before you decide to date, watch how the person you are interested in acts and treats people. This will tell you a lot about who that person is and how you will be treated. This can be hard to do if you start an online relationship with someone you've never met in person. Sometimes people say things about themselves online that aren't true.

Healthy Dating Relationships are about EQUALITY

Equality in a dating relationship means the relationship is balanced.

BOTH people...

- are happy and feel comfortable in the relationship
- are allowed to make decisions and choose what is right for them
- feel important and liked for who they are
- give and receive (e.g., attention, support, encouragement)
- are respected

Healthy Dating Relationships are about **INDEPENDENCE**

Dating someone can be exciting and fun, but you don't have to be together all the time. It's important that each of you has some independence. Independence in a relationship means:

- spending time apart (it's normal to be jealous sometimes, but try not to react in anger or make the person feel bad for wanting time alone)
- having your own friends, interests, hobbies, and activities

Did you know?

- Some people need more personal space or alone time than others. Think about how much space you need and let the person you are dating know. It's important to give the person you're dating space too.



Set
BoUNdARies

you create

YOUR own

boundaries

Healthy Dating Relationships are about BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are about knowing:

- your likes and dislikes
- what you want and don't want to do in the relationship
- your limits (i.e., what lines you don't want to cross)

Boundaries are important so you can feel **safe** and **comfortable** in your dating relationship.

When creating healthy boundaries, here are some things to ask yourself:

- How close do I want to be with the person I date, including physical stuff?
- How do I want to be treated?
- How do I want to be spoken to?
- How much do I want to share about myself?

YOU create your own boundaries and share them with the people you date. Your boundaries should never be pushed. You shouldn't be forced to do things that make you feel uncomfortable.

Let's Practice – Tips for Setting Boundaries⁵

SPEAK UP

Tell the people you date what you are cool doing and what you aren't. For example, "I like kissing, but I'm not okay with going any further."

BE CLEAR

Say exactly how you feel. Be honest! When you feel weird or unsure, take a break. It's always okay to stop and think about it.

USE "I" STATEMENTS

Begin statements with "I" as in "I don't want to ..." or "I feel ...". Be clear how you feel without blaming the other person.

DON'T APOLOGIZE

You have the right to say 'no' ANY time. You know what is okay for you, and you never have to say sorry for changing your mind or saying 'no'.

If someone is not respecting your boundaries and is trying to make you do things you do not want to do, it could be a sign of an unhealthy relationship. You may want to take a break or talk to an adult you trust for advice.

⁵The information on this page was adapted with permission from Teen Talk, a website from the Sexuality Education Resource Centre Manitoba. See the full website at teentalk.ca.

Setting Boundaries

ONLINE

Boundaries are important, whether you're hanging out **face-to-face** or **online**. 'Hanging out' online means communicating/talking (e.g., texting, messaging, sharing pictures) with someone through your phone, tablet, laptop, or other device.

To help you figure out what you want and what you are okay with when hanging out online, ask yourself these questions:

- Will we post our relationship status?
- Do I want the person I date to tag me in pictures?
- Am I okay with them posting or commenting about our relationship?
- Am I okay with them friending or following my friends?
- When is it okay for them to text me? Will they expect a text back right away?
- Is it okay for them to know my social media passwords and other passwords, or to use my phone, tablet, and other devices?

Once you've answered the questions on the previous page, it's important to talk about them with the people you date. Make sure to find out how they would answer these questions, too. Both of you should feel that your online boundaries are respected.

Remember, that independence and privacy are important in a dating relationship. You might be dating someone, but it doesn't mean you have to share everything with each other – like your electronic devices and passwords. If the people you date pressure you to see your phone or get one of your passwords, it could be a sign of an unhealthy relationship. If you think you are in an unhealthy relationship, talk to an adult you trust. You can also call the Kids Help Phone⁶.

Did you know?

- Sometimes people will do things online that they wouldn't do in front of someone. It's important to remember that boundaries are still important online.



⁶Kids Help Phone provides free online and telephone counselling to children and youth. You can chat with a counsellor online at www.kidshelpphone.ca or call 1-800-668-6868.

Signs of unhealthy dating

RELATIONSHIPS

POWER IMBALANCE

Jealousy: “I can’t handle the thought of other people looking at you or talking to you!”

Control: Telling someone who to hang out with or what to wear: “Why would you want to hang out with your loser friends when you can hang out with me?” **OR** “You’re ACTUALLY wearing that?”

Calling, texting, or messaging too much: “Where R U? Who R U with? Why R U ignoring me???” Call me!”

FEAR AND VIOLENCE

Making someone feel scared or nervous:

Being rough or violent (biting, hitting, pushing, slapping, kicking, or punching).

Name-Calling: Making fun of someone's ideas or looks: "What would make you ever think that? That's a stupid idea!" **OR** "You look trashy."

Insulting friends and family: "Your family is boring. You should stop spending so much time with them."

Manipulation: Making a person feel bad in order to get what they want: "I need you. I have no one else. If you break up with me, I'll hurt myself." Saying something nice about the other person to get what they want.

Anger: Lots of yelling or arguing. Freaking out on the other person when there are disagreements. Hiding things from someone to prevent angry outbursts and other negative behaviours.

GUILT AND BLAME

Making someone feel bad for saying

"No": Not owning up to mistakes and blaming the other person instead.

UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Not taking “No” for an answer: “Come on; just try it, just once. If you don’t like it I’ll stop, I promise.”

Threatening to share private information if the other person doesn’t do what they want.

LACK OF INDEPENDENCE

Becoming so involved with the other person that they start to lose themselves or forget who they are as an individual:

Being clingy (wanting to be with someone **ALL** the time and not giving personal space).


Do you think you might be in an unhealthy dating relationship? Talk to an adult you trust, like a parent, teacher, or counsellor. You can also call the Kids Help Phone.⁷

⁷Kids Help Phone provides free online and telephone counselling to children and youth. You can chat with a counsellor online at www.kidshelpphone.ca or call 1-800-668-6868.


You may decide to make positive changes to try to make the relationship work. Or you may decide to end the relationship. Either way, make sure you get the support you need.

Help and More Information

- **Kids Help Phone** provides free online and telephone counselling to children and youth. You can talk with a counsellor online at www.kidshelpphone.ca or call **1-800-668-6868**.
- Call **HealthLine** at **811** if you have questions about your physical or mental health.
- **Red Cross** - Healthy Relationship Tips and Online Course: <http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/violence--bullying-and-abuse-prevention/youth/healthy-relationship-tips>
- **Loveisrespect** is a website designed to help young people prevent and end abusive relationships, and build healthy relationships. Visit www.loveisrespect.org for more information.



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