



NEW  
UPDATED  
VERSION

# **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 you learn about what healthy relationships look 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 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.

Each person and each relationship is unique. 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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### ***Healthy relationships contain:***

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

**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

Being yourself is an important part of any relationship. Having confidence in who you are and liking yourself is the basis for healthy relationships with others.

## **Being yourself starts with knowing who you are.**

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



Answering the questions on the previous page will help you to know how you want to spend your time and who you want to spend your time with.



Spend time doing things that interest you – like music, sports, cultural events, and community events. While doing the things you enjoy, 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). A sign of a healthy relationship is when you feel comfortable to be yourself around that person and they help to bring out the best in you. If someone brings out the worst in you (e.g., makes you feel sad, pressures you to do things you don't want to do), it might be best to end the relationship.

# Healthy Relationships are about COMMUNICATION

## Good Communication is About TALKING

- Be open and honest about what you are thinking and feeling. Don't expect other people to read your mind ... tell them what's going on.
- Be assertive. This means telling people confidently what you think, feel, and want, while still respecting their feelings. Look right at the person and speak clearly.
- Share your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Use "I" statements to avoid blaming the other person.

### Instead of blaming:

*"You make me so angry! You're always late!"*

### Try:

*"I feel worried and upset when you're late. Try to be on time, and please let me know if you'll be late."*

**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.**



## Good Communication is About LISTENING

- Show those close to you that their thoughts and feelings are important by really listening to what they are saying.
- Give them your full attention. Use eye contact and avoid distractions.
- If you are upset or unsure about something someone says, ask them what they meant. Don't assume or jump to conclusions. It might be helpful to repeat what you heard to make sure you understand what they meant.
- Be calm even when you don't think the same way as someone else.

### Did you know?

- Words aren't the only way we communicate. **Body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice** give **clues** about our real thoughts and feelings. 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.



## Tips for Difficult Conversations

(adapted from [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca))

**Plan ahead:** Plan what you want to say ahead of time. Think about what you would like to discuss and the words you would like to use. If it helps, write it down or practice out loud.

**Pick the right time and place:** Don't start a serious conversation when you only have a few minutes or when you're in the middle of a crowd. Find a quiet spot so you can talk without distractions.

**Stay calm:** It is normal to sometimes feel hurt or angry with someone. Even if you are upset, it's important that both people listen to each other calmly and are allowed to share their thoughts and feelings.

**Take breaks:** If the conversation stops being productive (e.g., going over the same points again and again), or you cannot communicate calmly, take a break and come back to the conversation after you have had some time to think it through.

Healthy communication takes time and practice. It might feel awkward at first, but keep it up. It will get easier over time.

## Text and Online Communication

When communicating online, we don't always have the same clues that we have face-to-face, which can make online communication more challenging.

### Here are some helpful tips to consider when communicating online:

- Be open and honest about what you are thinking and feeling.
- 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.



Don't do or say things online that you wouldn't be comfortable with in person. To learn more about healthy online relationships, scan the QR code.



# Healthy Relationships are about RESPECT

Respect is about liking someone for who they are (e.g., their abilities, their personality, what they do), and paying attention to their wishes and feelings. It is about treating people in a way that shows you value them.

- 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.



**RESPECT**

## Remember

- 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.

**Know  
yourself**

# 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 needs help.
- understand that trust is earned over time. Trust can also be lost by things like breaking a promise or lying. Trust takes time to rebuild.

**Go to 'What To Do and How to Get Support'  
on the last page of this booklet if you or  
someone you know needs help.**

## How can I get back the trust we once had?<sup>1</sup>

- 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?"



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<sup>1</sup>The 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?

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.

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?



# Healthy Relationships are about **HAVING FUN!**

## **Hang out and have fun!**

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

## **Remember**

Relationships are not always easy. Sometimes they are hard work, but there should be more good times than bad. In some situations, it might be best to take a step back from a relationship. If the person is making you feel bad, is bringing out the worst in you, and isn't willing to work on your relationship together, it might be best to end it.

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 go to 'What To Do and How to Get Support' on the last page of this booklet.

# 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**. Like in any good relationship, **communication, respect, trust, support, and having fun** are important qualities to have in a dating relationship.

**Equality, independence, and boundaries** are important in all relationships, and are especially important in dating relationships.

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## **\*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)
- have equal say in what's going on
- 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 to have time to yourself in any relationship. Independence in a relationship means:

- spending time apart
- having your own friends, interests, hobbies, and activities
- making your own decisions and doing what is best for you

## 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 normal to be jealous sometimes, but it is important to give the person you're dating space too.



# 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, both online and in-person, so you can feel **safe** and **comfortable** in your dating relationship. **You** create your own boundaries and share them with people you date.

When creating healthy boundaries 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 and spoken to?
- How much do I want to share about myself?
- Do I want our relationship shared on social media (e.g., relationship status, tags in photos)?

## Let's Practice – Tips for Setting Boundaries<sup>2</sup>

### **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'.

Your boundaries should never be pushed. If someone is not respecting your boundaries, it could be a sign of an unhealthy relationship. Go to 'What To Do and How to Get Support' on the last page of this booklet for steps to take if you are experiencing an unhealthy relationship.

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<sup>2</sup>The 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](http://teentalk.ca).

# Let's talk about CONSENT

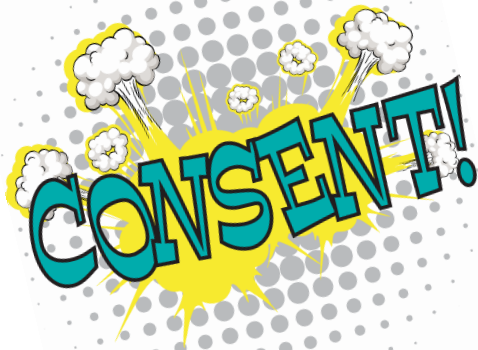
## What is consent?

Consent is an agreement to engage in an activity. It happens when you ask for or give permission to do something.

Consent is important in all relationships, but it is an especially important part of sexual relationships and sexual activity. All of the people involved need to understand what consent means, and must be able to give/receive consent.

## Consent is...

- Positive and clear - an easy to understand “yes”
- Ongoing - you can change your mind any time
- Clear-headed - you are awake, not drunk or high
- Not pressured - you are not threatened, harassed, or manipulated to say “yes”





## Consent and The Law

### Age of Consent to Sexual Activity

Sexual activity includes vaginal, oral, and anal sex, as well as kissing, sexual touching, and sexting. In Canada, the age of consent to sexual activity is 16. However, there are some exceptions to the age of consent law.

The “close in age” rule means that:

- 14- and 15-year-olds can consent to sexual activity with people who are no more than 5 years older than them
- 12- and 13-year-olds can consent to sexual activity with people who are no more than 2 years older than them
- Those under 12 years of age cannot consent to sexual activity

**It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to consent to sexual activity with someone in a position of trust or authority (e.g., a teacher, coach, boss, etc.).**

## Consent – Things to Keep in Mind

- Consent must be given **each time** sexual activity happens and **throughout** the sexual activity, even if you have done it before.
- Saying “yes” to one thing doesn’t mean “yes” to something else. If you want to move on to something else, each person needs to provide consent again.
- Consent can be taken away at any time, even in the middle of sexual activity.
- It is not consent if someone seems unsure or if they say “no” through words or actions.
- It is not consent if someone is pressured to say “yes”.

Sexual activity without consent is sexual assault.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Sexual assault includes any unwanted sexual act done by one person to another, including touching, kissing, oral sex, vaginal sex, etc.

# Boundaries and Consent ONLINE

Boundaries and consent are important, whether you're hanging out face-to-face or online.

Questions like “Will we post our relationship status?” and “When is it okay for people to text me?” can help you figure out your online boundaries. Talk about your boundaries with the people you date and find out how they feel, too. Both of you should feel that your online boundaries are respected.

Remember, **consent**, **independence**, and **privacy** are important in a dating relationship, including online. Dating doesn't mean that you have to share everything with each other - like your passwords and location. If you feel pressured to share things that you are not comfortable with, it may be a sign of an unhealthy relationship.

To learn more about healthy online relationships, including how to deal with difficult online situations, scan the QR code.



# 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?” “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!” “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?** If so, turn to ‘What to Do and How to Get Support’ on the last page of this booklet for advice. 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.

## What To Do and How to Get Support

- If you are concerned for your safety or the safety of someone else, call 911 or contact the police.
- If you have questions about your relationships or think you might be experiencing an unhealthy relationship, talk to an adult you trust or talk to someone at Kids Help Phone\*.
- Call Healthline at 811 if you have questions about your physical or mental health.
- Loveisrespect is a website dedicated to helping young people build healthy relationships and prevent unhealthy relationships. Visit [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) for more information.
- PREVNet is an organization working to address youth dating violence. Visit <https://youthdatingviolence.prevnet.ca/> to learn more.

\***Kids Help Phone** provides free counselling services for young people. You can chat with a counsellor online at [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca), text



Saskatchewan Prevention Institute  
1319 Colony Street, Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1  
Bus. 306-651-4300 Fax. 306-651-4301  
[www.skprevention.ca](http://www.skprevention.ca)

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