

Dating Relationships

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Most people want a relationship where there is respect, open communication and confidence. In a healthy relationship, each person respects the beliefs of the other person (even if they are very different from their own). People in healthy relationships are able to communicate their feelings openly and have confidence that they can count on the other person for understanding and support.

Healthy relationships are honest, respectful, responsible and equal (no one person has power over the other, and both have the same rights and the same responsibilities). This means that neither person pressures the other to do anything against his or her will or personal values and that they communicate effectively with one another about their feelings, ways of thinking, behaviors, and so on.

For relationships to be healthy, people must decide together how to take responsibility for their relationship and consider together the consequences of the decisions they make, including decisions about their sexuality.

Unfortunately, not all relationships are healthy. Some people manipulate their partners and make them feel bad or worthless or threatened. Some try to hold on to their partners by preventing them from seeing their friends or family, making them dress or act a certain way, or forbidding them from doing certain things. A person may use physical or emotional violence to try to control his or her partner. The worst thing is that they say they do this because "I love you so much that I want to have you near me and don't want to share you with anyone else."

A good partner is one who relies on another person and who knows how to make space and time for the other person's needs. They encourage their boyfriend or girlfriend to enjoy the company of others and to do their favorite things.

Some dating relationships (as well as marriage) involve sexual violence, for example when one person forces the other person to perform a sexual act that she or he doesn't want to, or punishes the person for not doing it. Such relationships are extremely harmful and affect the body (including the risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and physical injury) and the heart (emotional damage).

Violence in a relationship is unacceptable and should never be tolerated. Do not stay in a violent or abusive relationship. Even if your partner apologizes, the abuse is likely to continue and may even get worse. Save yourself: it may save your life.