



Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship

Mutual Respect

- Respecting each other's decisions and choices
- Accepting the other person for what and who they are

Mutual Trust

- Relationship is absent of lies, manipulation and secrets
- Jealousy does not get out of control
- Room for other friendships
- Building trust takes time
- Trust will grow

Mutual Support

- Comfort and empathy for one another
- Listening to each other
- Accepting the fact that no one is perfect
- Annoyances are worked through and not allowed to escalate
- Self-esteem is fostered with one another
- You are there for one another in good times and bad times

Relaxed and Easy Going

- You both have the ability to see the humorous side of life
- You are not afraid to say what is on your mind
- You can be yourself

Fair Fighting

- Arguments and disagreements are normal in all relationships
- No physical manifestations of power
- Stay in the "here and now" – do not drag up the past
- No name calling – it only makes things worse
- Talk about how you feel – use "I" statements

Mutually Enjoyable Sex

- Mutually agreed upon in a supportive manner
- Mutually agreed upon as to where and when
- Able to discuss any problems/concerns

- Consent once does not mean consent every time

Characteristics of Unhealthy Relationships

Isolation and Control

- Partner will not let you talk to other women/men
- Partner does not like your friends, or does not like it when you spend time with them
- Partner uses lies, manipulation and secrets to control you
- Partner uses silence, ignores you, withholds affection/attention to control you

Harassment

- Partner likes to scare you by doing crazy things
- Partner tells people things you said or did so you will feel stupid
- Partner looks through your personal stuff
- Partner threatens to hurt you, your family, your pet, etc.
- Partner flirts with other people so you will feel scared or upset
- Partner hits, slaps, punches, shoves or is physically rough with you, no matter that they say they are sorry after doing it
- Partner forces you to participate in sexual acts by using coercion, physical force or threats

Criticism

- Partner attempts to change you
- Partner criticizes what you say, think, do or feel
- Partner puts down your friends
- Partner puts you down by saying you are lazy, fat, stupid, ugly, useless, etc.
- Partner tries to make you feel inadequate and tries to diminish your self-esteem

Personal Characteristics of an Abuser

- Low self-esteem, even though it does not always appear that way
- Often withdrawn and will not talk about their feelings or problems
- Gets angry or violent; alcohol and/or drugs make the anger or violence worse
- Has strict ideas about the things that women and men can do
- Gets angry over little things

(Source: Characteristics of Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships pamphlet from Avalon Sexual Assault Centre)