



Illustration by
Billy Nuñez, age 16

EXPECT RESPECT: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

SIGNS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

- Respecting each other
- Knowing that you make each other better people
- Sharing common interests, but having outside friends and activities too
- Settling disagreements peacefully and with respect

Relationships are supposed to make both people feel happy. People should feel good about what happens when they are together.

Check (✓) the signs of a healthy relationship that apply to you.

Respect

- You ask each other what you want to do.
- No one tries to control the other person.

Common interests

- You enjoy doing things together, but no one feels forced to do anything.
- If you do have a disagreement—and it's OK to disagree—you both get to say what you want, talk until you're both happy, and then go out and enjoy what you've planned.

Being with each other or being apart

- You enjoy each other's company and feel happy when together.
- You each feel free enough to have your own friends and interests outside the relationship.

If you think your relationship is unhealthy, there are things you can do to make it better.

WAYS TO MAKE YOUR RELATIONSHIP HEALTHY

Respect each other.

Show you really care by sharing your thoughts and feelings. Listen to what your partner has to say.

Ask about the other person's interests.

Talk about sports, music, or movies—whatever helps you get past any awkward feelings and get to know each other better.

Have a life outside the relationship.

People are more attractive to each other if they have other interests. Keep up with your schoolwork, friends, and the activities you enjoy that do not involve your partner.

Resolve disagreements with love and respect.

People don't always have to agree on movies, music, or favorite sports, or even on how often to call or see each other. It is only natural for people to disagree. The important thing is how you reach an agreement. *With a good attitude, you can have a healthy disagreement.*

Can't agree on a movie?

Talk calmly until you both figure out what you are going to do. Two possible solutions are:

- Go to one kind of movie this week and a different kind next week.
- One of you can choose the movie and the other can choose where to eat.

It's also OK to agree to do things separately with your own friends.



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SIGNS OF AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

Feelings of fear, stress, and sadness are not part of a healthy relationship.

Check (✓) if any of the following signs of an unhealthy relationship apply to you.

Lack of respect

You “go along” with something even if you think it is not right. You feel bad about what happens when you are together.

Being held back

Your partner does not let you succeed in school, or you are made to feel guilty about doing things that interest you.

Controlling behavior

You may hear, “If you love me, I need to know where you are.” Your partner does not care about your friends.

Feeling “crazy in love”

One or both of you calls the other all the time. You feel your partner is possessive and smothering.

Getting blamed for your partner’s problems

You hear, “This is all your fault.”

Feeling jealous most of the time

A little bit of jealousy is normal. A lot of jealousy, or allowing jealousy to control what goes on between the two of you, will hurt the relationship.

Trying to change the other person’s behavior

One of you tells the other, “My way or no way.”

When you can talk about a problem, an unhealthy relationship can become a healthy one. But, if you can’t find ways to enjoy the time that you spend together, it may mean that it is time to end the relationship.

CROSSING THE LINE

There are some things that should never happen in a relationship. Your relationship has serious problems if any of the following things are happening.



Verbal abuse

Screaming, swearing, bullying, or calling each other names is never all right.

Pushing, shoving, hitting, or kicking in anger

Trying to control the other person’s behavior

Forced sex

You always have the right to refuse attention or affection.

Threats

If one of you does not get your way, a threat is made to hurt either the other person or yourself.

Breaking or hitting objects during an argument

If your relationship is crossing the line, the behavior needs to stop right away or the relationship needs to end. If you are having trouble ending a relationship, seek the help of an adult who cares about your well-being.

Talk with an adult you trust about how to end an abusive relationship safely. Use what you have learned to help make your next relationship better.

In a healthy relationship, after you settle a disagreement, you both feel respected.

NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSE

Nothing you say or do is a reason to be abused.

When things have calmed down, try saying:

- “I hated it when you swore at me. Don’t do that again.”
- “Don’t treat me that way. I have done nothing to deserve being _____.”
- “If you are upset, tell me. I can try to help, but yelling, screaming, and swearing at me does not help.”
- “If you treat me like that again, it’s over.”

OBEDIENCE IS NOT RESPECT

Nothing anyone says or does is a reason for you to be abusive.

You deserve to be liked and respected. Using force, power, or control only gets “your way.” This is not how to get respect.

If you push your partner around, you may get your way, but you lose your partner’s respect, support, and love.

If you are crossing the line, STOP.

If you can’t stop, get help.

- A teacher, coach, or counselor at school can help you learn how to treat your partner with respect.

- A spiritual leader or an adult at an after-school activity or club can help you learn how to control emotions, like anger or jealousy, and avoid abusive behavior.

By changing your behavior, you can get the true respect, support, and love that you deserve.

If there is no change in your partner’s behavior, talk with friends or a trusted adult and figure out how to end the relationship safely.

Connected Kids are Safe, Strong, and Secure

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This project was supported by Grant No. 2001-JN-FX-0011 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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HE50399

Graphic design and illustrations by Artists For Humanity, a non profit arts and entrepreneurship program for Boston teens.

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