



How Healthy Is My Relationship?

Following are two lists, one of healthy relationship characteristics and one of unhealthy traits. Many relationships have a combination of both. The point of this exercise is to figure out what things in your relationship are healthy or unhealthy, so you can gain appreciation for the best things and decide what you want to change. Read both lists, and check the heart next to every statement that is true about your relationship.

I am evaluating my relationship with: _____

IS IT HEALTHY?

Check the heart if you and this person...

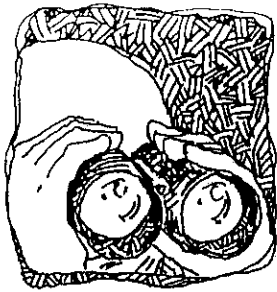
- ♥ Have fun together more often than not
- ♥ Each enjoy spending time separately, with your own friends, as well as with each other's friends
- ♥ Always feel safe with each other
- ♥ Trust each other
- ♥ Are faithful to each other if you have made this commitment
- ♥ Support each other's individual goals in life, like getting a job or going to college
- ♥ Respect each other's opinions, even when they are different
- ♥ Solve conflicts without putting each other down, cursing at each other or making threats
- ♥ Both accept responsibility for your actions
- ♥ Both apologize when you're wrong
- ♥ Have equal decision-making power about what you do in your relationship
- ♥ Each control your own money
- ♥ Are proud to be with each other
- ♥ Encourage each other's interests - like sports & extracurricular activities
- ♥ Have some privacy - your letters, diary, personal phone calls are respected as your own
- ♥ Have close friends & family who like the other person and are happy about your relationship
- ♥ Never feel like you're being pressured for sex
- ♥ Communicate about sex, if your relationship is sexual
- ♥ Allow each other 'space' when you need it
- ♥ Always treat each other with respect

IS IT UNHEALTHY?

Check the heart if one of you...

- ♥ Gets extremely jealous or accuses the other of cheating
- ♥ Puts the other down by calling names, cursing or making the other feel bad about him or herself
- ♥ Yells at and treats the other like a child
- ♥ Doesn't take the other person, or things that are important to him/her, seriously
- ♥ Doesn't listen when the other talks
- ♥ Frequently criticizes the other's friends or family
- ♥ Pressures the other for sex, or makes sex hurt or feel humiliating
- ♥ Has ever threatened to hurt the other or commit suicide if they leave
- ♥ Cheats or threatens to cheat
- ♥ Tells the other how to dress
- ♥ Has ever grabbed, pushed, hit, or physically hurt the other
- ♥ Blames the other for your own behavior ("If you hadn't made me mad, I wouldn't have...")
- ♥ Embarrasses or humiliates the other
- ♥ Smashes, throws or destroys things
- ♥ Tries to keep the other from having a job or furthering his/her education
- ♥ Makes all the decisions about what the two of you do
- ♥ Tries to make the other feel crazy or plays mind games
- ♥ Goes back on promises
- ♥ Acts controlling or possessive - like you own your partner
- ♥ Uses alcohol or drugs as an excuse for hurtful behavior
- ♥ Ignores or withholds affection as a way of punishing the other
- ♥ Depends completely on the other to meet social or emotional needs

This list is a way of identifying some of the healthy and unhealthy characteristics of your relationship – it does not cover every possible situation. You may want to share this list with someone in your support system, and talk about where you want to make changes in your relationship and how you can begin to do this.



What to Look for in a Partner

What makes a relationship healthy? Two people who value equality and respect make a good start. Here are some characteristics you may want to consider in a potential boyfriend or girlfriend.

- Someone who supports your relationships with friends and family members. S/he is willing to spend time with your friends and family to get to know them, and at the same time gives you space to spend time alone with them.
- Someone who maintains his or her own friendships, and wants you to get to know his or her friends.
- Someone who supports your personal growth. S/he encourages you to participate in activities that are good for you, like team sports or other athletic activities, clubs or groups you belong to, a job or a hobby.
- Someone who continues his or her own interests in outside activities, such as sports, clubs or groups, a job or a hobby.
- Someone who asks your opinion.
- Someone who is comfortable with your having different opinions from him or her, and does not take it as a personal insult when you disagree.
- Someone who you feel comfortable expressing your feelings and emotions with.
- Someone who talks and listens.
- Someone who accepts responsibility for his or her own behavior, feelings and thoughts.
- Someone who can apologize when he or she is wrong, and accept your apology when you're wrong.
- Someone who considers the relationship a partnership.
- Someone who shares in decision-making.
- Someone who expects both partners to control their own money, and never uses money as a way of getting what s/he wants.
- Someone who treats other people with respect. (If a male, one who treats his mother and sisters with respect.)
- Someone who is secure enough not to feel threatened by your friendships with people of either sex.
- Someone who trusts you and expects to be trusted.
- Someone who encourages you in your goals and dreams.
- Someone who makes positive statements about your strengths.
- Someone who you feel safe with.
- Someone who can resolve conflicts without resorting to violence or put-downs.
- _____
- _____

Family Shelter Service

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⊗ BARRIERS TO DISCLOSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ⊗

Disclosing domestic violence is often an agonizing decision for the victim. Below are some of the many reasons a victim must evaluate before deciding to share with you this very painful and confusing experience. A person who is the victim of domestic violence may:

- fear the abuser will retaliate as punishment for revealing the abuse
- have reason to believe that someone else would be harmed by the abuser if they leave
- be convinced that the abuse was in fact their fault
- have strong cultural, religious or family rules that dictate keeping family secrets
- believe children need two parents and revealing the abuse may change that
- fear the abuser will commit suicide, increase their drug or alcohol use, or become unable to function
- have experiences when a person they told did not believe them or blamed them
- have been told by the abuser that there will be negative consequences for revealing the abuse (children placed in foster care, deportation, the abuser would lose job, etc.)
- fear the possible legal consequences for the abuser (arrest, criminal record)
- feel embarrassed, humiliated, degraded, stupid, blamed, hopeless, crazy, etc.
- be unable to communicate effectively if English is not their native language
- have experience or fears about law enforcement / legal system exhibiting biased attitudes
- fear that information about the abuse will not be kept confidential
- be afraid that they will lose control if they begin to discuss the abuse
- know or believe that the abuser has connections in the law enforcement, medical, or judicial system
- be hopeful that some way will be found to stop the abuse
- believe they cannot afford legal representation if the abuser takes them to court
- have nowhere to go if they cannot go home
- believe there is no help and no hope
- not yet made the connection that the abuse will continue and escalate
- not yet labeled their experiences as "abuse"
- not feel safe disclosing that the abuse occurred in a gay or lesbian relationship
- fear the loss of their job if people found out
- try and protect you from the truth
- be concerned about the loss of abuser's medical insurance benefit for self and family
- be afraid that a "hidden" event from their past may be revealed to others
- fear that law enforcement officials will brutalize the abuser
- hold to their cultural beliefs that the police or government are the enemy
- know that the batterer has strong relationships with police officers, attorneys, etc.
- fear of retribution or harassment by abuser's family
- want to tell you about their situation but fear your rejection or minimization of their experience

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BARRIERS TO LEAVING

Victims of domestic abuse continually assess their reality and make choices based on what they find. They are not passive; they engage in step-like, logical behavior as they attempt to stop the violence or leave the relationship. Staying, especially given the lack of resources and social supports for leaving, should never be read as accepting abuse.

- fear that abuser would harm/kill me, our children or others I care about
- abuser may have threatened / attempted suicide or homicide
- lack of information regarding my alternatives
- insufficient financial resources
- fear of losing my children in a custody battle
- concern that leaving would have a negative emotional impact on the children
- loss of housing
- undeveloped or underdeveloped job skills
- exhaustion from constant abuse, control and trying to stay safe and protect the children
- belief that by changing the things the abuser has said are a problem, the abuse will stop
- loss of health insurance for self and children
- fear of involvement in court processes, lack of legal assistance
- abusive partner may have connections within the law enforcement and legal community
- belief that the abuse is a temporary problem and will stop
- family, cultural and religious messages to stay together
- children in special education classes may lose a specialized education plan
- family members or friends of either partner may interfere and disclose my location
- a counselor, therapist or clergy member have advised me to stay and work on problems
- abuser entered counseling or a batterers treatment program
- pets may not be able to leave with the victim and may be in danger if left with the abuser
- I depend upon the abuser for health care
- I relied on abuser to supply me with the drugs / alcohol I had become dependent upon
- I feared deportation, loss of required sponsorship to become a citizen
- gay and lesbian victims may lose family, employment, housing, etc. if abuser "outs" the victim
- the bad times may be few and far between so there is not a constant feeling of discontent
- fear of loneliness
- insecurity over potential independence
- insufficient support from family or friends
- concern that I will not be able to make it alone
- guilt about failure of relationship
- fear that partner is not able to survive alone
- belief that partner will change / victim will find a way to stop the abuse
- ambivalence and fear over making extreme life changes