Healthy Relationships bring happiness and health to our lives. Studies show that people with healthy relationships actually live longer and have less stress. There are some basic keys to having a healthy relationship whether it is with parents, friends, boyfriend, girlfriend, roommates, or professors.

Each person brings his/her hopes, ideals, and expectations to the relationship. Sometimes these are unrealistic, unfair, and even self-defeating. They may doom the relationship to be unsatisfying and to eventually fail.

Healthy Relationships:
People in healthy relationships feel loved and respected for who they are. They do not feel bad about themselves, fearful, or pressured when they are with their partners. Evidence of a positive relationship is seen in the way individuals relate to one another.

These signs include:

Negotiation & Fairness – there is a mutually satisfying resolution to conflict and compromise

Trust & Support – each person has his/her own friends, goals, feelings, and opinions

Honesty & Accountability – each individual accepts personal responsibility and admits when he/she is wrong

Communicating openly and truthfully

Respect – listening non-judgmentally to one another and valuing each others’ opinions

Unhealthy Relationships:
Often we are so anxious to be in a relationship that we tolerate behavior that is unhealthy, especially if that behavior comes about slowly. Violence often starts with little things that can be denied, ignored, or even forgiven. Dating violence usually begins with verbal and emotional abuse and can progress to physical and/or sexual assault.

It helps to have a clear picture of what this means in order to recognize it in the relationship:

Verbal/Emotional Abuse: One partner insults, ridicules, bosses, or tries to control the other, often with threats.

Physical Abuse: Begins when one partner grabs, slaps, shoves, or pinches the other. This can escalate to outright hitting.

Sexual Violence: One partner forces the other to engage in any type of sex.

Dating violence is more common than most people think because people who are being abused don’t usually talk about it:
- They may not realize they are being abused.
- They may think they are imagining it.
- They may come from a violent home and think it is normal.
- They may be attracted to or in love with the abuser.
- They may be ashamed or too embarrassed to talk about it.
- They may even think that they deserve it.

Remember, conflict is normal in any relationship and working it out together can bring you closer. Be concerned, however, if when you disagree, your partner:
- Insists on doing it his/her way
- Will not compromise
- Will not listen to your ideas
- Insults you or puts you down
**Tips for a Healthy Relationship**

Keep expectations realistic
Genuinely listen to one another
Don’t criticize – use “I” statements
Don’t hold grudges
Keep your life balanced
Be flexible and BE YOURSELF!!

**Common Patterns and Mistakes in Relationships:**
- Expecting he/she will change
- Hoping he/she won’t change
- Assuming you and your partner think/feel the same
- Giving up other activities, interests, and friends
- Expecting every relationship to be “the one”
- Expecting that he/she will not make mistakes
- Believing anyone can fulfill all your social, intellectual, and personal needs
- Working hard in the beginning then exerting little effort later
- Feeling incomplete without a relationship.
- Expecting him/her to have the same interest, goals, priorities as you
- Not realizing that relationships change over time

**Things To Question**

**Is your partner:**
- A take-charge kind of person?
- Someone who tries to control every detail?
- Loving and Attentive?  
- Demanding and Jealous?
- Charming and Fun?  
- Has to be the Center of Attention?
- Jealous of your time with friends.

**Does he/she:**
- Tell you how to dress or wear your hair.
- Throw or break things when angry.
- Get angry over small things.
- Abuse alcohol or other drugs.

Although these behaviors don’t always lead to physical abuse, a person exhibiting these traits is more likely to become violent.

Please see our website at: [http://www.shepherd.edu/safweb/counseling](http://www.shepherd.edu/safweb/counseling) for additional information.

Shepherd University Counseling Services
Located in Gardiner Hall
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