

Healthy Relationships – Taken from The Center for Women and Families – www.centeronline.org

There are many different factors involved in a healthy relationship:

- Understanding what a healthy relationship is
- Guidelines for developing a healthy relationship
- Knowing your rights in a relationship and how to stand up for them
- Understanding healthy ways to handle anger

Understanding Healthy Relationships

To avoid abusive relationships, you need to be able to recognize a healthy one. Look for the following qualities in your relationship:

- It means not rushing into a relationship before getting to know one another
- It means being an individual, as well as, a couple
- It allows both partners their own ideas and opinions
- It means not expecting the other to be perfect, or to meet stereotyped ideas of roles in life
- It allows partners equal sharing of power; neither one has authority over the other
- It allows two people with high self-esteem to respect and like themselves and each other
- It allows both partners their privacy
- It means not making a long term commitment before both partners are ready
- It means being friends as well as lovers
- It means breaking up is not the end of the world

Guidelines for Developing Relationships

The most important thing in developing a healthy relationship is to love yourself before you fall in love with someone else. Some people mistakenly believe they are nothing without being in a relationship with someone else.

Learning to like and value yourself includes:

- Ability to enjoy being by yourself
- Thinking highly of yourself – looking positively at your body, mind and capabilities
- Feeling okay about not being involved in a relationship
- Having goals in life and not allowing anyone to be an obstacle in achieving them

If you can do all of this, you are a complete person with high self-esteem. Someone with high self-esteem is less likely to let themselves be abused or mistreated.

Know Your Rights in a Relationship and Stand Up for Them

These rights include:

- Having your own interests and friendships
- Having your wants and needs be considered as important as those of your partner
- Developing your potential through personal growth experiences
- Being responsible for your own behavior, not the behavior of your partner's
- Expecting to resolve differences through negotiation, not intimidation or threats
- Not being physically harmed by your partner
- Not being verbally abused, called names or criticized
- Not being forced into sex

Handling Anger

Partners in a healthy relationship learn to deal with their anger in positive ways that do not hurt the other person verbally, physically, sexually or emotionally. Suggestions for healthy ways of handling anger:

- Learn your own warning signals of anger: fist clenching, teeth gritting, headache, stomachache, etc. Take action before it's too late.
- Walk away until you have calmed down.
- Count to twenty.
- Talk it over with someone you trust.
- Exercise and release that pent-up energy caused by anger.

Take it slowly in any relationship. Get to know the other person well. Find out how they deal with stress and conflict. Find out how they express their feelings, particularly anger. Discuss what you both want in the future –careers, children, division of household labor, etc. Discuss how the finances will be handled. Trust your feelings. If it doesn't feel right, it isn't.