

It feels like love. BUT IS IT HEALTHY?

Relationships can range from healthy to unhealthy to abusive. It is important to know what each of these relationships looks like so you can make the right decisions if you find yourself in a not-so-healthy relationship.*

What is a Healthy Relationship?

Based on the definition from loveisrespect.org, a healthy relationship is when:

- your partner respects you and lets you be yourself
- both of you feel safe being open and honest
- your partner supports you and your choices, even when he or she disagrees with you
- both of you treat each other as equals and respect each other's boundaries
- your partner understands that you may want to do things separately, like hang out with friends
- you can communicate your feelings without being afraid

The South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (SCCADVSA) says healthy relationships should also have:

- forgiveness
- understanding
- shared responsibility
- trust
- effort
- commitment

What is an Unhealthy Relationship?

Relationships that are based on power and control are considered unhealthy relationships. You might be in an unhealthy relationship if:

- your partner isn't considerate, respectful or trusting of you
- your partner does not communicate his or her feelings
- your partner tries to control your money or emotions
- your partner doesn't let you get or keep a job or gets you fired
- your partner puts you down in public, such as on Facebook, Twitter or in front of friends/family

Other traits of an unhealthy relationship include:

- shouting/yelling
- possessiveness
- insults
- jealousy



What are the Warning Signs?

Some warning signs of abuse may be overlooked in the beginning of an unhealthy relationship. Things to look for include:

- checking your cell phone without your permission
- bullying
- extreme jealousy
- temper tantrums
- keeping you away from family and friends
- accusing you of things that are not true
- mood swings
- telling you what to do
- physically harming you

If you or someone you know is in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, make a plan to safely handle the situation. For more information on making a plan, download the LoveisRespect safety plans:

- High School Safety Plan
www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Teen-Safety-Plan.pdf
- College Safety Plan
www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/SafetyPlan_College_Students.pdf

How to Help Someone in an Unhealthy Relationship

As a friend or family member of someone in this situation, it is important that you provide as much support as possible. Here are some things you can do:

1. Help them make a safety plan using the tools mentioned above.
2. Even when you don't understand or agree with their decision – don't judge them. Listen and be supportive.
3. Connect them to resources and information in their area.
4. Chat with professionals at a local support service to find information to share, like peer advocates and support groups.
5. Be mindful about how you use social networking and DO NOT post about your loved one on sites like Facebook or Twitter. It may show their current location or where they hang out and their partner could use it to find them.
6. Understand that leaving an unhealthy or abusive relationship can be difficult and even dangerous. Allow the person you're trying to help to make up his or her own mind.
7. Avoid blaming or unkind comments. Abusive partners usually put down their victims regularly, so your friend or loved one might already have pretty low self-esteem.
8. Don't give up even though helping can be frustrating at times.

There are many different types of abuse that may not look or sound the same as what you have seen on TV. Please make sure you and your loved ones are educated on what healthy relationships are and how to safely get out of unhealthy or abusive situations. You can get more information about preventing and surviving unhealthy and abusive relationships through the links below:

- SC Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (SCCADVASA): www.sccadvasa.org
- Love is Respect: www.loveisrespect.org