

## tip sheet

# Is your relationship healthy?

A healthy relationship with your friends, family and partner can enhance your life and make you feel good about yourself. Relationships take time, commitment and care to keep them healthy. The more effort you put into a relationship, the more you get back. Common qualities found in healthy relationships include: trust, open communication, respect, equality and shared interests, while maintaining individuality.

A healthy relationship is one of the best supports in life you can have, providing you with meaning and purpose. However, a relationship can be one of the biggest drains if it is not working or has become unhealthy for you. Look for the unhealthy signs and learn ways to work on repairing relationships.

## What is an unhealthy relationship?

A relationship is unhealthy when it involves disrespectful, controlling or abusive behaviour. It causes stress that builds up over time and can spill into other areas of your life, such as family, work, school or university.

## Warning signs

There will be times in a relationship when you experience the below, however an unhealthy relationship is one that displays these features more frequently. In an unhealthy relationship you may find that you:

- Feel pressure to change who you are for the other person
- Feel worried when you disagree with your partner
- Feel unsafe and insecure
- Feel agitated or anxious when your partner is around
- Neglect yourself or your partner
- Feel pressure to quit activities you used to enjoy

- Pressure the other person into agreeing with you or changing to suit you better
- Have to justify your actions (e.g. where you go, who you see)
- Find that you or your partner demand sex or refuses to practice safe sex
- Have fights where there is hitting, slapping, punching or other physical violence
- Try to control or manipulate each other
- Notice your partner criticises or tries to control the way you dress, look or act
- Disrespect each others' friends and family
- Mistreat each other

If your relationship has some of these traits it does not necessarily mean you have to end the relationship. If you think that these traits are having a negative impact on your relationship, you can begin to work on them to make your relationship healthier.

## When should I seek help for my relationship?

If you or your partner ever try to harm each other or force each other to do something sexually, that is a clear sign that your relationship is unhealthy and is time to consider getting help. Even if you believe your partner loves you, there is no excuse for violence or threats.

1300 78 99 78  
mensline.org.au

MensLine Australia is a professional telephone and online support, and referral service for men, specialising in family and relationship concerns.

## What are the signs of a healthy relationship?

No relationship is perfect. However, the sign of a healthy relationship is that it enhances your life and brings more happiness than stress. In a healthy relationship you and your partner are treating each other well. In a healthy relationship you:

- Don't have violence in the relationship
- Maintain relationships with friends and family
- Have separate identities and your own activities/interests
- Express yourselves to one another without worrying that it will lead to a big argument or that they will leave you
- Feel safe
- Trust each other
- Are able to say no to sex or anything you are uncomfortable with
- Forgive one another for mistakes and don't hold grudges
- Communicate with each other
- Address conflict fairly and negotiate
- Are aware of your partner's vulnerable spots and don't use these in an argument

## How can I make positive changes to my relationship?

- Talk to each other about what matters to you. Regular communication is essential in any relationship.
- Really listen and try to understand each other. Try not to interrupt while your partner is trying to tell you something.
- Try to find solutions that work for both of you. You will probably need to compromise on some things.

- If you don't know what to do about your relationship concerns, talk things over with a trusted friend. They might have useful perspective.
- Be supportive. Try not to make judgements when your partner makes mistakes, or does things differently to you.
- Take responsibility for your actions. Remember, only you can change your behaviour.
- Be there for each other, in the good and not so good times.
- Take care of yourself. It can be easy to lose yourself and your needs in a relationship so try to remember your own needs.
- Keep your life balanced. Remember to take the time to enjoy your own hobbies and interests outside of the relationship. Healthy relationships aren't completely dependant!
- Be yourself! It's much easier and more fun to be yourself in your relationship.
- Let it go! Holding grudges can be damaging to a relationship.

## Ask for help if you need it.

Talk to a counsellor either in person or on the telephone if you have questions or concerns about your relationship, or if you just want someone to listen.

**You can try calling MensLine Australia (1300 78 99 78) or Lifeline (13 11 14).**

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