



RELATIONSHIP TOOLKIT

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY RELATIONSHIP IS HEALTHY/SUPPORTIVE?

People form many different types of relationships, such as friendships, romantic connections, and physical or sexual partnerships. What each relationship looks like can vary greatly from person to person, and what is considered “healthy” is often subjective.

Relationships exist on a spectrum—from supportive and positive, to unsupportive, or even abusive. Even generally supportive relationships may sometimes include unsupportive behaviors.



SUPPORTIVE → UNSUPPORTIVE → ABUSIVE

No matter what form a relationship takes, all supportive relationships are built on four key pillars: Equality, Safety, Respect, and Trust.

SUPPORTIVE VS. UNSUPPORTIVE VS. ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS



SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (LOOK LIKE):

- Communicating clearly
- Respectful behavior
- Trusting one another
- Enjoying personal time apart
- Honesty and equality
- Making mutual choices

UNSUPPORTIVE BEHAVIORS (CAN LOOK LIKE):

- Lack of communication
- Disrespect
- Dishonesty
- Not trusting each other
- Pressuring into activities
- Economic imbalance
- Trying to take control
- Only spending time together

ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS (CAN LOOK LIKE):

- Hurtful or threatening communication
- Accusations of cheating (without reason)
- Gaslighting
- Controlling behavior
- Isolating a partner from others
- One partner making all the decisions
- Physical, mental, or emotional abuse

BOUNDARIES

No matter if you're casually having sex, just beginning to date, or in a committed partnership(s), setting and respecting boundaries is key.

All partners should feel safe sharing needs, desires, goals, and concerns—and those boundaries must be respected. A healthy relationship creates space for open communication without fear of negative reactions.

There are boundaries of all kinds, and people have them for different reasons. Examples include emotional, digital, and physical boundaries.

PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

Physical boundaries protect your body. This includes when and how you want to be touched (if at all), what type of touch (kissing, holding hands), and deciding when and if you want to have sex.

Tips for discussing physical boundaries:

- **Find the right time:** Talk when you're calm, distraction-free, and not rushed.
- **Talk face to face:** Texts and emails can cause miscommunication. Serious topics are best in person.
- **Be honest:** Share your true feelings; honesty strengthens relationships.
- **Check your body language:** Show respect by giving full attention—avoid multitasking while discussing important topics.

DIGITAL BOUNDARIES

Digital boundaries define how we want to be treated online. These include what texts you're comfortable with, preferences about social media, and whether you want to be tagged in photos.

Questions to ask your partner(s):

- What pictures are you comfortable sending or receiving?
- Do we want to share passwords?
- Can I post about our relationship online?
- Is it okay to follow/friend other people?
- Is it okay to check in at places together?

ONLINE SAFETY

Many of us spend a significant amount of time online. Almost everything we do can be done on the internet, whether that is finding information or staying connected with others is easily accessible on the internet. However, this constant online activity, along with the routine collection of information whenever we're online, gives abusive partners more opportunity than ever before to access our personal information and keep track of what we do and where we go. **Some things to keep in mind when deciding your digital boundaries:**

DIGITAL SAFETY NOTES



Privacy

You have the right to privacy. Sharing passwords can compromise this.



Sexting

Once you send a photo, you lose control over it. Consent matters here too.



Cyberstalking

Harassment online is the same as stalking in person and is illegal.

BOUNDARIES CAN CHANGE.

Something that felt okay at the start of a relationship might not later—or vice versa. It's important to openly communicate about evolving needs, and make changes together with respect.



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CONSENT

Consent is an ongoing, mutual agreement about what partners want to experience.

WHAT CONSENT LOOKS LIKE

Sexual consent means that everyone involved freely and enthusiastically agrees to what's happening, and they have all of the information they need before giving consent. Consent is important at all times, whether it's kissing, touching, or having sex. Anyone, regardless of gender or role in the relationship, can and should ask for consent. Here are some key rules about consent:

KEY RULES OF CONSENT:

It must **be freely given**—without pressure, manipulation, or drugs/alcohol.

It must be **clearly communicated**—through words or actions.

It is **specific**—saying yes to one thing doesn't mean yes to everything.

It **can be taken back**—anyone can change their mind anytime.

It should be **enthusiastic**—a true “yes,” not reluctance.

Remember, checking in and communicating openly makes everyone feel respected and safe.

CONSENT IS NOT:

- Silence
- Saying yes under influence of drugs/alcohol
- Flirting
- Dressing a certain way
- Accepting a ride or gift



SIGNS A PARTNER IS NOT RESPECTING CONSENT MAY INCLUDE:

- Using pressure or guilt
- Acting like you "owe" them
- Responding with anger if you say no
- Ignoring your words or body language



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DATING VIOLENCE & TYPES OF ABUSE

Dating abuse can involve coercion, intimidation, or manipulation—aimed at gaining power and control. Abuse can happen once or repeatedly.

Abuse is **fundamentally** about **gaining power and control** over the other person. Even if leaving isn't possible right now, your safety comes first. Abusive partners rarely change without intervention.



Get support

Love is respect offers confidential support to young adults and their loved ones asking help, resources or information.

Text ("LOVEIS" to 22522) or Call (866.331.9474)

TYPES OF ABUSE

Physical	Hitting slapping choking pushing
Sexual	Pressuring for sex, unwanted touching, tampering with birth control, sharing nudes without consent.
Emotional	Put-downs, threats, manipulation, mind games.
Digital	Cyberstalking, demanding passwords, online harassment.

RED FLAGS

Signs you may be in an abusive relationship include:

- Partner gets angry easily or blames you often
- Checking your phone/socials without permission
- Isolating you from friends and family
- Jealousy or possessiveness
- Threats to hurt themselves if you leave
- Physical harm (hitting, choking, throwing objects)
- Name-calling, ridiculing, or making you feel bad about yourself
- You feel afraid to bring up issues
- You stop hanging out with friends/loved ones

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

Supporting someone in an abusive relationship means listening without judgment and respecting their choices. Abuse is never their fault. Ways to help:

- Be understanding, not judgmental.
- Help create an emotional safety plan.
- Reach out if they want support.
- Create a **personal safety plan** ↗ (e.g., code words, emergency contacts).
- Encourage documenting incidents.
- Find campus/community resources together.

KEEP YOURSELF SAFE, TOO:

- Maintain privacy in communication.
- Seek professional help if needed.
- Avoid direct confrontation with the abuser.
- Know your limits and care for your own well-being.

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