

Characteristics of Healthy vs. Abusive Relationship

A healthy relationship means that both you and your partner are...

Communicating: You talk openly about problems without shouting or yelling. You listen to one another, hear each other out, respect each other's opinions, and are willing to compromise.

Respectful: You value each other as you are. Culture, beliefs, opinions, and boundaries are valued. You treat each other in a way that demonstrates the high esteem you hold for one another.

Trusting: You both trust each other. This trust has been earned.

Honest: You are both honest with each other but can still choose to keep certain things private. For example, you both know that it is important to be honest about things that affect or involve the relationship and still know that it is also ok to keep certain things private.

Equal: You make decisions together and you hold each other to the same standards.

Enjoy Personal Space: You both enjoy spending time apart and respect when one of you voices a need for space.

Make Decisions on Sexual Activity Together: You talk openly about sexual decisions together. You both consent to sexual activity and can talk about what is OK and what isn't. If you're having sex you talk about possible consequences together, such as pregnancy or STDs. You decide together how to address these things, such as through condoms and birth control methods.

An abusive relationship starts when just one of you...

Communicates Abusively: During disagreements there is screaming, cussing, or threatening, or these things happen even when there is no argument. A partner is demeaning or insulting toward the other.

Is Disrespectful Through Abuse: A partner intentionally and continuously disregards your feelings and physical safety.

Falsely Accuses the Other of Flirting or Cheating: A partner suspects flirting or cheating without reason and accuses the other, often harming their partner verbally or physically as a result.

Doesn't Take Responsibility for the Abuse: The violent or verbally abusive partner denies or minimizes their actions. They try to blame the other for the harm they're doing.

Controls the Other Partner: There is no equality in the relationship. What one partner says goes, and if the other partner tries to change this there is increased abuse.

Isolates the Other Partner: One partner controls where the other one goes, who the other partner sees and talks to. The other partner has no personal space and is often isolated from other people altogether.

Forces Sexual Activity: The how, when, and where of sexual activity is determined by only one partner. Threats and violence are used prior to or during sexual activity.