

Maintaining a Healthy Relationship With Your Spouse or Dating Partner



Studies show that healthy relationships make us happier, improve our well being, and can offer health benefits. Conversely, unhealthy relationships can damage our self esteem and cause stress and anxiety. But how do you know if your relationship is healthy? Healthy relationships include balance, trust, respect, support and good communication. Consider the following as you assess the health of your relationship.

Balance

- Does each of you maintain and respect healthy boundaries?
- Does each of you feel free to express your opinion?
- Does your relationship allow for change and growth?
- Is time spent with friends and family encouraged and respected?
- Does your relationship get in the way of school, work, or other commitments?
- Are your friends and family happy about your relationship?

Trust

- Are you honest with each other?
- Are you able to be yourself when you are together?
- Does you or your partner say one thing but mean another?
- Can you depend on each other?

Respect

- Do you treat each other with respect and kindness?
- Is either of you overly negative or critical?
- Has either of you ever acted in a threatening manner?
- Do either of you have a problem controlling anger?
- Do you argue on a regular basis?
- Do either of you have a problem with alcohol or drugs?

Support

- Are you gaining something positive from your relationship?
- Do you feel cared for and valued?
- Does spending time together make you happy?
- Do you feel positive about your relationship?

Communication

- Is there equal and open communication in the relationship?
- Do you ask for each other's opinions?
- Do you listen to each other and try to see things from the other's point of view?
- Do you share helpful information with each other?
- Does each of you share a genuine interest in what the other has to say?

Conflict

Conflict in a relationship is normal. But how you handle conflict can make or break a healthy relationship. The goal of a conflict should be compromise. If you handle conflict the right way, you can diffuse the anger and come to common ground, a win-win situation. However, if you argue unfairly, you will not reach a compromise and neither one of you will be happy. Here are some common pitfalls to avoid when dealing with conflict in a relationship, as well as tips for positive communication during disagreements.

Common pitfalls

- Refusal to listen to the other's point of view.
- Using disrespectful language or name calling.
- Assuming you know the other person's motives or thoughts.
- Refusal to compromise.
- Bringing up past events to fuel the argument.
- Refusal to apologize.
- Arguing when you are too angry.
- Planning what you are going to say next while the other is talking.

Tips for positive communication

- Be open to hearing the other person's point of view, even if you disagree.
- Show your partner you are listening by restating what you heard them say.
- Avoid blame and judgment.
- Allow your partner to explain and don't interrupt.
- Discuss the issue without bringing up things that happened in the past.
- Admit that you may be wrong – saying you are sorry can go a long way toward solving conflict.
- If you are angry, give yourself time to calm down before talking.
- Really listen to the other and respond to their points.
- Attack the problem, not each other.
- Be willing to give and take.

Seek assistance

The Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program (JHSAP) is committed to assisting students in managing the challenges they face during their academic careers. JHSAP provides support to students in dealing with personal, academic, and relationship problems.

Getting help is free, easy, convenient, and confidential. Our goal is to get to know you, understand the challenges you are facing, and to discuss how to move forward in a healthy way. To this end, the JHSAP offers a variety of services including:

- Assessment of your current concerns.
- Brief, supportive counseling.
- Referral to appropriate and accessible community services and resources.
- Consultation that supports academic and/or professional development.
- Immediate support and management for crisis situations.
- Dean, Faculty, and Staff consultations.
- Risk assessment for students.
- Training, education, and outreach.

For more information contact the Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program at 443-287-7000 or visit our website at www.jhsap.org