

QUICKIES: healthy relationships a sex ed summary from scarleteen.com

What is a healthy relationship? A healthy relationship is one where everyone is doing their part to keep things happy, respectful, supportive and fair. In healthy relationships, everyone involved shares power and responsibility instead of trying to get or keep all or most of it for themselves.

It can help to think of any relationship as being like a see-saw. If one person is sitting still on one end texting somebody instead of moving, the other person stays stuck at the top. If one person gets off and walks away, the other person stays stuck on the ground. In a healthy relationship that see-saw is always moving, with each person doing their part. That's a big part of what makes relationships a "we" rather than just an "I" or "you."

Relationships where each person is not making a real effort to do their part to make things good for everyone are often unhealthy.

What do we do in healthy relationships?

We communicate. We honestly say what we want, need and feel. We listen to what the other person says they want, need and feel. As the relationship grows and changes, we keep talking openly about both the good stuff and the challenging stuff. When there's conflict, we work through it in a kind, caring and respectful way. We focus on the issue and caring for each other instead of "winning" an argument or fight.

We respect boundaries. Boundaries are the invisible lines we draw between ourselves and other people so we have the space we need to be ourselves, separate from the relationship. In a healthy relationship, people respect each other's boundaries. No one pushes or tries to break down anyone's boundaries.

We don't rush things. A new relationship may make us happy, but we need to go slow with the big stuff, like making commitments to, or agreements with each other, or changing our lives in big ways for the relationship. That means not pushing or making any huge decisions when we've only been in the relationship a few days, weeks or months.

We're flexible. We understand that people, including ourselves, change. That means relationships will usually change too, in both small and bigger ways, and we accept that.

We each get to be our own person. We have lives and interests outside of the relationship. This includes having other relationships we value. We don't rely on or ask one relationship to give us everything we want and need. We also understand that we can't control our partner or make them be how we want them to be.

We trust each other. When we trust each other, we believe each other's feelings and actions. We feel our private thoughts and feelings are safe with the other person. We feel we can depend on one another. We accept that we can't know what someone else is doing every minute of every day. We shouldn't need to know that when we trust them. If we feel distrustful, we work to build trust instead of seeking to control each other.

We're equals. Being equals means we have the same amount of say and influence in a relationship. We make big decisions together. One person shouldn't make all of the decisions in the relationship. One person shouldn't use their power to do things in or with the relationship that the other person doesn't want or didn't agree to.

We are safe. No one should be emotionally, physically or sexually unsafe in a relationship. No one should be called names or put down, harassed, stalked or emotionally controlled in other ways. No one should be physically hurt on purpose, forced or coerced (pressured) to do anything they don't want to do sexually, affectionately or otherwise. We should feel and be actively shown that our partner would never intentionally harm us. We should clearly show a partner we would never harm them on purpose. If we are not safe in these basic ways or we don't feel safe, our relationships are likely abusive instead of healthy.

If anyone in a relationship is unable to be safe for everyone else in it, that person will first need to become safe for others before getting into or continuing the relationship.

We care about each other. We each want the other person to feel safe, happy, and understood in the relationship. If one of us feels scared, unhappy, or stressed by the relationship, we take that as a sign that something needs to change.

Healthy relationships usually feel good. Everyone in a healthy relationship will feel good in it and about it most of the time.