

Building Healthy Relationships

FEBRUARY 2026

HUMAN CONNECTION

Relationships can help improve emotional, physical and mental well-being while providing love, safety, security, value, and a sense of belonging. Relationships can also cause harm if they are unhealthy.

RELATIONSHIP GOALS

- Trust, love, respect, support, safety
- Freedom to be yourself
- Openness and vulnerability
- Continued personal growth

TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS

- Romantic
- Platonic
- Family
- Professional

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS









- Reduce risk for depression, anxiety and stress
- Improve heart health
- Improve immune function
- Increases motivation

UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- Increase risk for heart attack, cardiovascular disease and death
- Physical and mental effects like: Anxiety, sadness, tension, headaches, stomach upset, poor sleep, mental fog, guilt/shame, insecurities, frustration/anger

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Healthy Relationships

-  Mutual respect
-  Safety/Trust
-  Honesty
-  Healthy Conflict
-  Coping
-  Individuality
-  Self-Confidence
-  Fun

Unhealthy Relationships

-  Power/Control
-  Anger/Hostility
-  Dishonesty
-  Distrust
-  Dependence on Others
-  Manipulation
-  Abusive



BUILDING HEALTHY CONNECTIONS

Self-Improvement

- Be your authentic self; know your strengths and weaknesses
- Know your self-worth; love and respect yourself
- Be willing to learn and grow; accept feedback from others
- Set personal goals
- Practice self-control and mindfulness

Communication

- Be an active listener
- Consider how you speak; tone and phrasing, use “I” statements instead of “you”
- HALT conversation if you are hungry, angry, lonely or tired
- Stay calm, be respectful, take breaks when conversation turns negative
- Talk in person

Develop Coping Skills

- Practice self-awareness; recognize emotions and process before responding
- Get to the root of the problem; understand where your feelings come from
- Maintain emotional regulation; deep breaths, muscle relaxation exercises
- Healthy outlets: hobbies, coloring, puzzles, reading, music, journal
- Seek support: trusted friends, support groups, counselors/therapists

Establish Boundaries

- Physical, mental and emotional limits to feel safe and comfortable
- Mutual respect and understanding, emphasizing healthy over control
- Never be forced to do anything; everyone has the right to say no
- Define, communicate, establish consequences: “I’m not comfortable with that”, “I need time to think about that”, “If you get angry again, I will ask you to leave”

Protect Your Overall Health

- Practice physical self-care: healthy diet, activity, sleep
- Quit unhealthy substances used to cope; seek support
- Have alone time to think about what you want your relationships to feel like
- Take time for good friends and family, take breaks when you need to
- Take care of yourself first

ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS HEALTHY?

Ask Yourself

- Am I happy being around this person?
- Do I feel valued and respected?
- Do I like who I am when I'm with them?
- Would I tell others how I'm treated?
- What advice would I give someone else?
- Would I be ok feeling this way for the rest of my life?

Setting Boundaries

- How do I take care of myself after situations that leave me feeling drained or upset?
- Who or what helps me feel understood, calm, or safe?
- What can I do to have better self-awareness and self-control in difficult situations?
- What types of situations leave me feeling anxious, overwhelmed, controlled or drained?
- What healthy boundaries should I put in place to protect my well-being?
- Is my relationship unhealthy or am I unsafe?
- Do I need to seek support?

Seeking Support

- Local relationship counseling support
- Maryland Department of Health
- Pro Bono Counseling Project of Maryland
- Call **211** for resources

Domestic Violence Resources:

- National Domestic Violence Hotline
- **1-800-799-SAFE** or text **BEGIN** to **88788**
- Maryland DV: Text **HOME** to **741741**
- Local emergency room

