

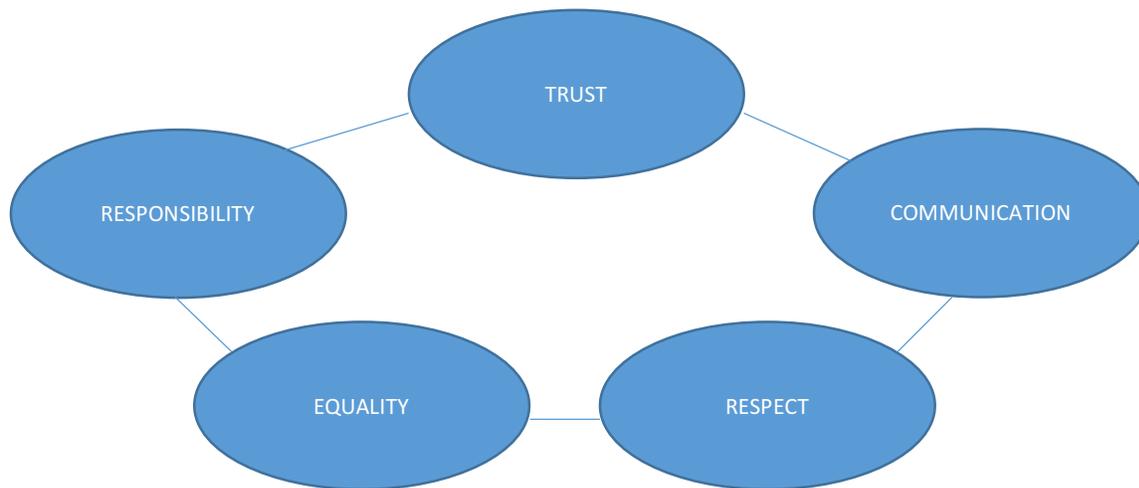
## Healthy Relationships

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Whether it is with a family member, a friend, or a significant other, relationships can make us happy and feel good about ourselves. But in order for a relationship to have a positive effect on your life, it needs to be healthy.

Unhealthy relationships that include dating violence can lead teens to poor self-esteem, use of drugs and alcohol, poor work performance, depression, and suicide.<sup>1</sup> It is important that adolescents learn and understand how to recognize whether or not a relationship is healthy.

A healthy relationship majorly includes the following:<sup>2</sup>



### **TRUST**

Does your partner trust you in the relationship? For example, if you hang out with your friends, does your partner get jealous or worried that you will cheat on him or her?

A healthy relationship consists of partners that can believe in each other's honesty towards the relationship. There is trust embedded in the relationship as well as while communicating.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Supportive communication is essential to a healthy relationship. This means talking to your partner about anything and everything in a respectful way – this includes sex!

If something in the relationship is bothering you, it is important to talk to your partner about it. Avoid using the words “you” and try to use the words “I” when talking about your problems. For example, if you are complaining about your partner being messy, don't say “you are so messy!” Instead, say “I feel

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010) *Understanding teen dating violence fact sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/teen-dating-violence-factsheet-a.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Planned Parenthood. (2008) *Am I in a healthy relationship?* Retrieved from [http://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/8614/0042/3587/HealthyRelation\\_2008ENG.pdf](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/8614/0042/3587/HealthyRelation_2008ENG.pdf)

as though I am cleaning all the time and I am not finding it fair. Can we agree to keep our place tidy?" By using this approach, your partner becomes less defensive and more understanding of your concerns.

Be sure to actively listen to your partner as well. It is important that you give your partner the attention that he/she deserves when he/she communicates with you.

### **RESPECT**

Having respect for your partner is what helps make a relationship a healthy one. Do you like your partner for the way he/she looks? Or do you like your partner for their personality? When talking to your partner, do you speak to them as though they are beneath you? Or do you talk to them as though they are an equal? If respect is lost, then so is the health of the relationship.

### **EQUALITY**

A healthy relationship is when both members of the party give and take. The needs and requests from both people need to be equal. When the relationship turns into a power struggle, the relationship can turn sour and weak. One person should not have to fight to get his or her way all of the time – it needs to be a fair balance between the two people. This can mean fairness in making decisions and equality (and respect) when talking to one another.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

Do you care about your partner's best interests? An example of this would mean not doing things that would put your partner at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STI) or an unintended pregnancy.

It is also your responsibility as a partner to support the person you are in a relationship with. Can your partner count on you during the good times *and* the bad times? Being supportive is a very important part of a healthy relationship.

## Warning signs of an unhealthy relationship

- ✧ Jealousy
- ✧ Anger
- ✧ Lack of communication
- ✧ Criticism in a way that hurts or belittles the partner
- ✧ Forces the partner to quit activities/jobs/friendship circles
- ✧ Lack of respect to the partner's right to privacy
- ✧ Violence such as hitting, biting, stabbing, kicking, punching, or pushing
- ✧ Sexual abuse or harassment, including forcing the partner to have sex, touching in uncomfortable and non-consensual ways, and not respecting the partner's physical space

Often the abuser will apologize for their wrong-doings, but then abuse again. It is important that you recognize if your partner is doing this and seek help. Talk to a family member, a friend, or authorities if you need to. This is not part of a healthy relationship.

→ Healthy Relationships Game (adapted from *Game On! The Ultimate Sexuality Education Gaming Guide*)

## HEALTHY 7 CARD GAME

Adapted from *Game On! The Ultimate Sexuality Education Gaming Guide*

### OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify healthy and unhealthy behaviors in a relationship
2. Explain why a behavior is a healthy or unhealthy aspect of a relationship
3. List seven desired healthy relationship qualities

### AUDIENCE:

Youth aged 11-18

### TIME:

Approximately 45 minutes

### MATERIALS:

- White board and marker
- Healthy 7 deck of cards (*see deck of cards on following pages*)

### PROCEDURE

1. After reviewing the ground rules, write the words **TRUST**, **COMMUNICATION**, **RESPECT**, **RESPONSIBILITY**, and **EQUALITY** on the board. Explain that social researchers have found that these are important qualities of healthy relationships. Ask the participants to share examples of these in the context of a healthy relationship.
2. Explain that they will play a card game that will review characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Some cards illustrate communication, respect, responsibility, trust, and equality and are therefore healthy. Other cards demonstrate unhealthy characteristics. Each player will have 7 cards in hand throughout the game. At each turn, players will remove a card in hand that is unhealthy, and keep cards that are healthy. The object of this game is to reinforce healthy characteristics; therefore, the winner will be the first player to have a hand of 7 cards, all of which illustrate healthy relationship behaviors.
3. Break participants into small groups with no more than 8 participants/group.
4. Instruct groups to select one person to serve as the “dealer” for the card game.
5. Give a deck of cards (*see deck of cards on following pages*) to each dealer and tell the dealer to shuffle the deck.

6. Once the deck is shuffled, instruct the dealer to give 7 cards to each person in the small group.
7. Tell participants to take a moment to look at the 7 cards and decide which cards are healthy (illustrate trust, communication, respect, responsibility, and equality).
8. The player to the left of the dealer will begin play by picking up a card from the deck and discarding a card in hand. The card that is discarded should be a card with an unhealthy characteristic, and it should be placed in a pile with the statement side up. The player should discuss why the card is unhealthy.

**Note:** *If there is a card that is difficult to decide upon, group members will need to talk about it and vote whether the characteristic is healthy or unhealthy. The decision will be made by the majority vote of group members.*

9. Group members will continue to pick up a card and discard an “unhealthy” card at each turn until there is a winner for the group. A winner is someone who has 7 cards in hand with statements that describe healthy characteristics of a relationship.

**Variation 1:** There can be duplicate cards among the 7 winning healthy cards

**Variation 2:** All of the cards have to be different

10. After each group has a winner, ask the following questions:

***Discussion questions:***

- a. How did it feel to play *Healthy 7 game*?
  - b. Which statements were healthy? Why?
  - c. Which statements were unhealthy? Why?
  - d. How might someone feel about being in an unhealthy relationship?
  - e. If a friend were in an unhealthy relationship, what would you recommend he/she do?
11. OPTIONAL: Pass out pieces of paper to participants and ask them to write down 7 healthy qualities that they would want in a relationship. Ask for volunteers to share what they recorded.

CARDS CAN BE FOUND ON THE NEXT PAGE. Print them out and cut on the line.

Sex is the most important thing

You don't have to pretend to be someone you're not

You feel energized being with the person

You feel worn out and tired being with the person

One person usually decides what to do and where to go

You have fun being with the person

You are constantly fighting and making up

You don't spend time with your other friends anymore

You're embarrassed or uncomfortable being with the person in a group

Your partner accepts you the way you are

You feel closer to the person as time goes on

Your time with your partner interferes with your studies or work

You spend time by yourself without the person

You like being seen with the person

Your partner respects your thoughts and feelings about feeling sexual

You are not afraid to talk about what's bothering you

You keep the relationship because it's better than being alone

You're afraid to bring up the subject of family planning and condoms

Your partner accuses you of fooling around with someone when you are not

Your partner calls or turns up unexpectedly in order to check up on you

Your partner occasionally cheats on you

Your partner gets jealous when you talk to other guys or girls

Your partner makes sure that you both want to do physical touching

You and your partner tell the truth about what you think and feel

Your partner is constantly text messaging you

Your partner posted pictures of you on the internet without telling you

**WILD CARD!**  
(You name a healthy behavior in a relationship)

Your partner thinks you are not as smart as them

Your partner does not make decisions for you

Your partner hits you

You feel valued in your relationship

Your partner respects your sexual comfort levels

Your partner blames all the problems on you