



understanding and maintaining healthy romantic relationships

Romantic relationships come in all shapes and sizes, and there's no single set of rules about what they should be.

Yet there are some things that healthy relationships have in common – good communication, being respectful and supportive, and feeling safe and secure.

From something casual to a committed relationship, your safety and happiness should never be at risk.



Building your relationship

Healthy relationships can take time and effort. Here are some tips you can use to help build yours.

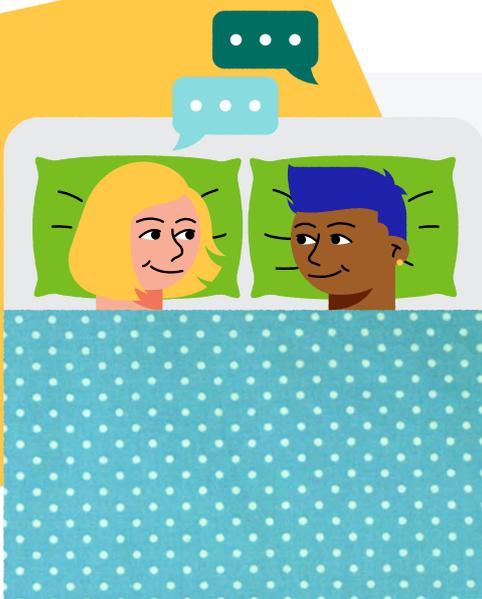


Treat each other as equals

Treating each other as equals helps keep relationships strong, safe and supportive.

It means everyone is:

- willing to compromise where appropriate
- experiencing equal give and take
- respecting each other's ideas, boundaries and choices
- working together to understand each other's needs.



Set boundaries

Setting boundaries is an important part of all relationships. They help to define the things, activities and behaviours that are needed to keep you happy and connected – they help you and your partner understand your limits.

Emotional boundaries

Emotional boundaries include sharing your feelings and your life stories. Do you want to get into details or take it slow and build trust along the way? They also include your need for space and time apart. It's a good idea to maintain your external friendships and hobbies and to encourage your partner to do the same.

Financial boundaries

Discussing financial boundaries helps you both be clear about how you want finances to work. Some people choose to share their money and others prefer to keep things separate. It really depends on what works best for you.

Physical and/or sexual boundaries

The key to physical and/or sexual boundaries is respect and consent. Consider the amount and type of any physical and/or sexual contact and what is OK for you.

Sexual consent is an ongoing and freely given agreement between people who are engaging in any sexual activity together. To learn more visit headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/sexual-consent.

Digital boundaries

What are you OK with when it comes to sharing personal information or sexual content online or with other people? (e.g., posting details about the relationship; using each other's devices; sexting/nudes).

It's important to remember that your body is yours and any form of violence, intimidation or overstepping of your boundaries isn't acceptable and is not a part of healthy relationships.



Communication

Healthy relationships include open and honest communication. Communicating well with your partner can strengthen your relationship and help you overcome any challenges.

Opening up to your partner can take trust, time and practice. Speaking up about what you think, feel and need is an important part of any relationship.

Being able to be ourselves is important, it helps us feel confident and understood. It builds trust in the relationship and helps both partners understand each other's likes and dislikes.

Be a good listener

Listening is an important part of a healthy relationship. Everyone needs the opportunity to be heard, talk uninterrupted and be taken seriously.

Resolving conflict

It's OK to have different opinions – practise disagreeing and asserting yourself respectfully. Try to avoid personal attacks and instead focus on the issue. For example:

- try to see your partner's point of view
- be willing to compromise and come up with options you're willing to accept
- admit when you're in the wrong
- agree to disagree
- if it gets heated, agree to take some time and come back to the discussion later.

Trust

Trust in relationships helps you feel safe and secure – it's important for both partners to trust and be trusted.

It can take time to build and earn trust though and it can be built in many ways such as:

- respecting boundaries
- being honest
- being there for your partner – not taking them for granted
- feeling physically and emotionally safe in the relationship
- admitting your mistakes
- resolving arguments respectfully.

Getting support

No matter where you are on your relationship journey support is always available.

Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, Elder, counsellor or a support service like 1800RESPECT – 1800respect.org.au for relationship counselling and resources.

Check out our further tips and try an interactive activity on our website via the QR code below.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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