

## **Healthy, unhealthy & abusive relationships**

**Aim:** To consider indicators of a healthy, unhealthy & abusive relationship with young people.

**Time:** 20 minutes minimum.

### **You need:**

Sets of 'relationship cards', copies of relationship spectrum (enough for each group)

### **How to do it:**

Ask participants to form small groups or pairs and give each group/pair a set of relationship cards. Ask groups/pairs to discuss each card and place where they feel it sits on the spectrum from healthy to abusive. If they are unsure about whether or not the behaviour belongs to a healthy, unhealthy or abusive relationship, ask them to place the card aside. Encourage discussion along the way.

When groups have finished, see if everyone agrees where each card belongs by reading the statements about relationships and asking young people where they put this card. Ask for reasons, especially where there is disagreement or where young people define some behaviour as unhealthy/abusive. Highlight that some behaviour can be viewed differently based on the context. There are some 'answers' on the backs of the cards but some people may disagree with these. This activity highlights that what we are happy to accept in a relationship can vary and that negotiating relationships is an important skill to learn. It can also highlight that some young people see behaviour as healthy that is actually quite concerning. Recent research shows that many young women do not identify behaviour that is unhealthy or abusive. See following article for more information.

<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/reports/a20072270/domestic-abuse-relationships-cosmopolitan-uk-womens-aid-research/>

**Variation:** If you want to get the young people moving, create healthy, unhealthy and abusive areas of the room. Give each young person a card and ask them to read out the statement. The group should then discuss the behaviour and ask the YP to move to one of the areas – or stay in the middle if they cannot reach a consensus.

Statement	Answer
Your partner tells you how special you are and how much they care about you.	Healthy: Everyone wants to be loved and cared for by their partner. Because a relationship consists of two people, it is important that each person knows how much the other means to them.
Your partner uses a name or pronoun that you don't like but stops using it once you correct them or ask them not to.	Healthy: Even in healthy relationships, we can mess up and do something upsetting. In a healthy relationship, you should feel comfortable telling your partner when something upsets you and they should take it seriously and work with you to ensure your safety and happiness.
You and your partner have an argument and they give you the silent treatment for days afterwards.	Unhealthy: The silent treatment only leaves room for more confusion. There will be days that you and your partner disagree on some things, and it is important that you keep your communication strong. It's not right for you or your partner to hold grudges. And silence alone is unhealthy for any relationship.
Your partner appreciates your passions and encourages you to do the things you love.	Healthy: The things you enjoy should be important to your partner even if they are not the same as what they enjoy. They should always encourage you to do what makes you happy.
You miss your partner when you go on vacation with your family but you have a really good time anyway.	Healthy: Sometimes, you just need a break and going away on vacation is a great way to take one. Your partner should understand that. Of course, you may miss them, but you realize and appreciate all the fun you are having anyway.
Your partner controls your Facebook and other social media accounts.	Abusive: When you join a social network, it doesn't ask for the name of two people, it just asks for one. So remember that and know what you say and do on your profile should be your business. Your partner shouldn't have a say so on who you follow, what you post or who leaves you a message.
Your partner says you don't really love them because you want to go to a movie with a friend instead of spending time alone with them.	Unhealthy: It is not ok if your partner makes you feel bad or guilty for wanting to hang out with a friend instead of them. In a healthy relationship, your partner respects, and trusts you when you are out with your friends and doesn't make you feel like you constantly have to prove your love.

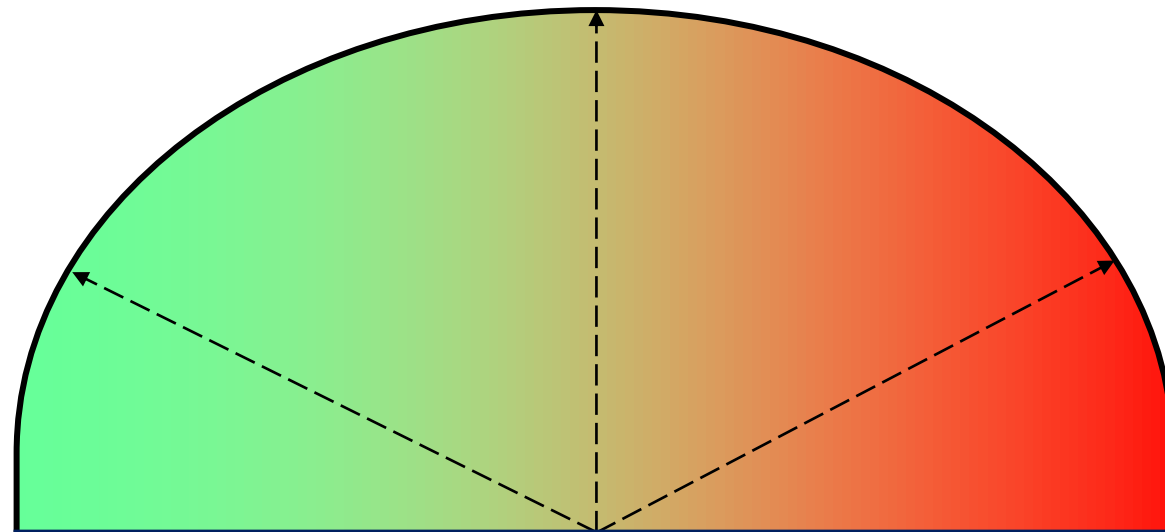
<p>After an argument, your partner blocks the doorway and takes your keys to prevent you from leaving.</p>	<p>Abusive: Blocking your way like that is emotional abuse. While someone's physical safety may be threatened they're not physically being assaulted, the effect is not physical harm but it has a very emotional impact.</p>
<p>You always feel like your partner's wishes and goals come first.</p>	<p>Unhealthy: Compromise is the key to a healthy relationship and when your wishes differ from that of your partner, there should be compromise. Healthy relationships don't feel one sided. They feel as though both partners are important and matter in the relationship.</p>
<p>Your partner randomly stops by your job/college/gym etc. even though you told them that it made you uncomfortable.</p>	<p>Abusive: Anytime a partner continues to do something after you tell them it makes you uncomfortable, they are being abusive.</p>
<p>You and your partner agree to take the night off from texting or calling each other, but while you're out with your friends your partner calls and texts you multiple times to say they miss you.</p>	<p>Unhealthy: When you make an agreement with someone, they should respect that agreement. It is important that you and your partner respect one another's space and the agreements you make with each other.</p>
<p>Your partner refuses to spend time with your family, but still expects that you spend time with theirs.</p>	<p>Unhealthy: First things first: jealousy of any kind is NOT a sign of love. If you spend time with your partner regularly, then they should understand and respect your decision to spend time with other people, especially if it's your family or friends.</p>
<p>Your partner threatens to tell other people about your sex life or share private photographs or texts.</p>	<p>Abusive: You have a right to privacy and if your partner threatens to expose parts of you or your relationship as a way to control your actions, that is abuse.</p>
<p>You had a really good day and can't wait to tell your partner because you know they will be excited to hear about it.</p>	<p>Healthy: Your partner should feel that your happiness is important and enjoy hearing about your day, even when it's just going over your daily routine.</p>

<p>Your partner gives you gifts but demands something in return, like money or sexual acts.</p>	<p>Abusive: Gifts should not come with expectations, particularly of sexual acts that may make the other partner uncomfortable or that they're not ready for. Demanding this type of repayment is abusive.</p>
<p>Your partner texts you more than you want them to and gets angry if you don't respond.</p>	<p>Unhealthy: Everybody deserves space even from their dating partner. Feeling as though you don't have enough is a sign of an unhealthy relationship.</p>
<p>Your partner demands access to your bank account.</p>	<p>Abusive: You have the right to keep some things private. Demanding access to your finances is abusive.</p>
<p>When you go to your favorite restaurant and order something different, your partner acts disgusted and calls you stupid for ordering it.</p>	<p>Abusive: No matter how healthy the relationship, no two people will always like all the same things. But name-calling is an abusive behavior and unnecessarily hurtful. Why do they care about your food choice?</p>
<p>Your partner tells you they wouldn't hit you if you just did things the right way.</p>	<p>Abusive: It is never okay for someone to strike their partner and it is certainly abusive for the person who was violent to blame their behavior on their victim.</p>
<p>You and your partner feel like you can share things with each other, but you also feel like you can keep some things private.</p>	<p>Healthy: You and your partner should have enough respect for one another where you two understand what information should be shared-- such as hobbies and mutual interests -- and what should not be shared -- like social security numbers and pin codes to bank accounts.</p>

**Unhealthy**

**Healthy**

**Abusive**



Relationships, and the behaviours we do and experience in them, exist on a spectrum. Some behaviours make us and our partner feel good, safe, supported and cared for. These make a healthy relationship.

Others make us and/or our partner feel unhappy, hurt, unsafe and uncared for. These behaviours are not acceptable in a healthy relationship. A relationship where one or both partners behave like this is unhealthy or even abusive.

**Decide where on the spectrum the following statements would go.**