



SELF-HELP NOTES

UI COUNSELING & TESTING CENTER



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout your life, you will have the opportunity to develop relationships. It is important to know the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships, as well as how to make choices to preserve healthy relationships.

Characteristics of Healthy Relationships:

- Trust
- Honesty
- Emotional Intimacy
- Shared Respect
- Open and Direct Communication
- Comfort with Being Apart
- Equality
- Good Boundaries
- Feeling Supported
- Talking and Sharing
- Conflict Resolution
- Commitment
- Friendship
- Joy, Playfulness, and Laughter

It is important to remember that relationships change over time. Relationships are exciting and sometimes easy to establish in the beginning, while long-term relationships require work and effort by both people.

Suggestions for building and maintaining healthy relationships:

- ❖ Explore Mutual Interests: Discuss hobbies, goals, academics, and other topics of common interest. This will help you determine what you can do together, as well as give you ideas of new things to try.
- ❖ Be Yourself: It's easier to initiate and maintain long-term relationships as your true self. Healthy relationships are built on foundations of truth and honesty.
- ❖ Show Appreciation: Remember to say "thank you" and be appreciative of the kindness and thoughtfulness from your partner or friend.
- ❖ Be Dependable: Follow through with plans and commitments. Take responsibility for what you agreed to do. If you are not able to follow through, communicate this to your partner or ask for help.
- ❖ Communication: Express your needs, thoughts, and feelings. Healthy relationships require open communication and not assuming what the other person "knows."
- ❖ Compromise: It is expected that you will have differences in opinion. Communicate these differences, be flexible, and work together to come up with a solution that will fit for both of you.
- ❖ Realistic Expectations: Your partner or friend will not be able to meet all of your needs. There is a chance that you will be disappointed at some time in the relationship. It is important to work towards acceptance and forgiveness in your relationships.
- ❖ Self-Care: Keep balance in your life by developing relationships as well as your own independence. While relationships enhance life satisfaction, they cannot be relied on as the only source of happiness and fulfillment.

Relationship Stressors

There are many outside factors that influence relationships. These factors have the potential to create stress, anxiety, or worry. Here are some common external factors that create stress in relationships:

- ✓ Differences in religious beliefs or cultural norms
- ✓ Family influences
- ✓ Amount of time together or apart
- ✓ Academic requirements
- ✓ Work requirements or work stressors
- ✓ Financial problems
- ✓ Drugs and alcohol

Ways to cope with outside stressors that may negatively influence your relationship include:

1. Spending time learning about differences in background so that you are familiar with beliefs and values of your partner or friend.
2. Openly communicating about expectations and needs for time together or apart.
3. Setting appropriate boundaries to maintain balance between work, school, and social requirements.
4. Talking to your partner or friend about how outside factors are influencing the relationship. Ask how you can be supportive if he or she is struggling with personal problems.
5. Working together to manage outside stressors. Listen to your partner or friend and be open to new suggestions or ideas.

Unhealthy Relationships

No one deserves to be in an unhealthy relationship. Healthy relationships make us feel good about ourselves, while unhealthy relationships make us feel bad or uncomfortable.

Characteristics of Unhealthy Relationships:

- Negativity
- Hurtful and Harmful Behavior
- Continual Conflict
- Crossing of Boundaries
- Minimal Conflict Resolution
- Selfishness
- Ignoring or Avoiding Problems
- Feeling Scared
- Lack of Support
- Feeling Judged or Put Down

If you are currently in an unhealthy relationship, it may be time to re-assess your relationship needs and/or seek couples or individual counseling.

Professional Help Available

The University of Idaho Counseling & Testing Center offers free confidential counseling for personal and relationship concerns for full time UI students. For more information call (208) 885-6716 to reach the Counseling & Testing Center, Mary E. Forney Hall, Rm. 306, 1210 Blake Ave. All appointments are confidential.
Website: www.uidaho.edu/ctc