

HANDOUT: Teacher Discussion Guide: Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships

Definition

A healthy relationship has open and honest communication and an even playing field on which partners share power and control over decisions.

An unhealthy relationship has an imbalance in which one partner tries to exercise control and power over the other through threats, emotional abuse and physical abuse.

The outcome of growing and learning through open communication is the development of strong, emotionally complete men and women who are interested in and capable of having healthy relationships. The following guidelines provide insight into the characteristics of people in healthy relationships.

In a healthy relationship...

- Your partner listens to your thoughts and feelings.
- You feel safe being with your partner, both alone and with others.
- Your partner encourages you to spend time with your friends and family when you want to.
- You decide together when, and if, to have sex.
- Your partner allows you to make your own decisions and supports you in those decisions.
- You feel happy, loved, and satisfied in your relationship.
- Your partner encourages you to maintain those things that are important to you, and to pursue your individual interests.
- Your partner is respectful towards you when alone and with others.
- Your partner recognizes your strengths and accomplishments and gives you credit for them.

In an unhealthy relationship...

- You feel like you cannot live without your partner.
- You stop seeing other friends or family, or give up activities you enjoy because your partner doesn't like them.
- You feel like you have to "walk on eggshells" to keep your partner from getting angry.
- You are afraid to tell your partner your thoughts or feelings about the relationship.
- You stop expressing opinions if your partner doesn't agree with them.
- You feel that you are the only one who can help your partner and that you should try to change him/her.
- You stay because you believe that your partner will kill himself/herself if you leave.
- You believe the critical things your partner says about you.

Adapted from: www.advocateforyouth.org/teens/health/relationships/healthy.htm www.advocateforyouth.org