

Healthy Relationships for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

A guide written for people with IDD, by people with IDD.



Created by participants of the
All In Project.



What is a Healthy Relationship?

Healthy relationships make us feel good. They are based on trust, respect, kindness, and love.

Healthy relationships can be **romantic**:

- Spouse, wife, or husband
- Partner, girlfriend, or boyfriend

Or they can be **platonic**:

- Friends
- Coworkers
- Family

Healthy relationships are:

- Safe
- Loving
- Respectful
- Sharing responsibilities
- Communicating about our feelings
- Good for us!
- Having boundaries and respecting boundaries
- Sharing hobbies
- Having someone to share life with



Can a Relationship be Unhealthy?

Unhealthy relationships make us feel bad about ourselves. They can make you feel ashamed of who you are and what you like. Here are some of the things that can make a relationship unhealthy:

- Abuse, hitting, yelling, or fighting.
- Anger or a bad temper.
- Saying mean things or calling a partner names.
- Unwanted touching or sexual behavior.
- Stealing money or controlling how you spend your money.
- Invading privacy.
- Lying or making someone believe things that are not true.
- Limiting who a partner can talk to or hang out with.
- Violating a partner's boundaries.

If you think you are in an unhealthy relationship:

- Ask for help from someone you trust like a parent or close friend.
- Tell your partner what is making the relationship unhealthy and try to fix it.
- If your partner will not work to fix the problem, break up with them. Ask for help breaking up if you need it.
- Sometimes, breaking up with an abusive partner can make their abuse worse. Tell someone you trust if you are going to break up and ask for help if you feel unsafe.



If you are the one making your relationship unhealthy:

- Apologize to your partner and change your behavior.
- Ask for help if you cannot change your behavior on your own.
- Ask your partner how you make them feel and how you can make them feel better.
- If you cannot change your behavior, end the relationship.

Advice for Having a Healthy Relationship



- Talk to people you trust about your relationship! Parents, guardians, and close friends can all support you.
- Go slow! Get to know someone before being in a romantic relationship. It is good to be friends first!
- Meet their family and friends. It is an important step in building a relationship to get to know the people in your partner's life.
- Be honest--do what you say and say what you mean.

What is Dating?

Dating is when two people with romantic feelings for each other do activities together. Dating does not always include sexual activities or behaviors. Sometimes it just means doing things together.

It can be two people trying to decide if they want to be in a relationship or just want to be friends.

Or it can be two people in a relationship who go out together.

Two people who are dating each other might feel attraction to each other.

- This means you think the other person is cute, handsome, beautiful, or hot.

Advice for Dating

If you have romantic feelings for someone, you should think about if they would be a safe person to date.

Friends are people we know really well. If you have romantic feelings for a friend, they might be a safe person to ask on a date.

We do not date family members.

Strangers are not as safe to date until we know them better--it is a good idea to be friends first!

People who are close to the same age, developmental level, and/or have similar life experiences may feel more like equals. There are also laws about how old people must be to have sexual contact or get married.

It is your choice how, or if, you share your body with someone else. **It is your body--YOU get to decide.** Your partner has the same choice. Ask for consent before sending, posting, or asking your partner to send pictures or videos. There are also rules and laws about sending and asking others to send pictures or videos of private body parts.

If you ever feel uncomfortable about something someone has done or asked you to do, ask for help from a trusted adult.

Examples of Activities for a Date:

- Going out to a restaurant to eat a meal
- Doing a fun activity you both enjoy
 - Bowling
 - Arcade
 - Dancing
- Seeing a movie
- Going to a concert or a play
- Going on a walk at the park



Advice for a First Date

Know your boundaries
and be clear about
them.

Be yourself and be honest!
Consider a double date if
you're nervous.

Give someone you trust your
date's information and tell
them where you will be.

Meet in a public place and do
not share private or financial
information.

HAVE FUN!
Dating should be fun.



How to Ask Someone on a Date

Ask for **consent** (permission).

- Let them know you have romantic feelings for them.
- "I have romantic feelings for you. Would you like to go on a date with me?"
- Use the word "date" so they know it is not just two friends hanging out.

Tell them when and where you would like to go on the date so they have all the information.

Compliment them! "I like how helpful you are and your cool outfits. I am interested in getting to know you romantically. What do you think? Would you like to go on a date with me?"

- One or two compliments is enough--too many can be overwhelming!
- Compliment their personality or their style--not private body parts.



If you ask someone on a date, they might say "YES!"

You might feel good, happy, excited, relieved, proud, great, or nervous..

It is okay to tell people close to you, but it is not okay to tell a bunch of people. Dates are personal.



If you ask someone on a date, they might say "NO."

You might feel sad, disappointed, angry, or upset.

It is okay to feel these things, but it is not okay to make them feel bad for saying no or to tell other people mean things about them. They have a right to say no if they are not interested. **Do not** ask them on a date again if they have already said no.

What to do When You are Asked on a Date

Most people will get asked on a date at some time in their lives.

- This might be exciting for you! You also might feel surprised, nervous, scared, happy, or many other feelings. Any feelings you have are okay!

When someone asks you on a date, you should give them an answer. It is okay to tell them you need some time to think about it or ask your parent(s) or guardians about it, but do not make them wait a long time.

- Try to give them an answer right away or within a day or two.

Remember: you are valuable and important! Anyone would be lucky to go on a date with you. You do not have to say “yes” to the date unless you want to go!



If someone asks you on a date, you can say “YES!”

Only say “yes” if you want to go on the date. Make sure they give you all the details-when, where, what.

Tell a couple people you trust about the date so they can help you plan. You do not need to tell a lot of people-just enough for you to feel safe.



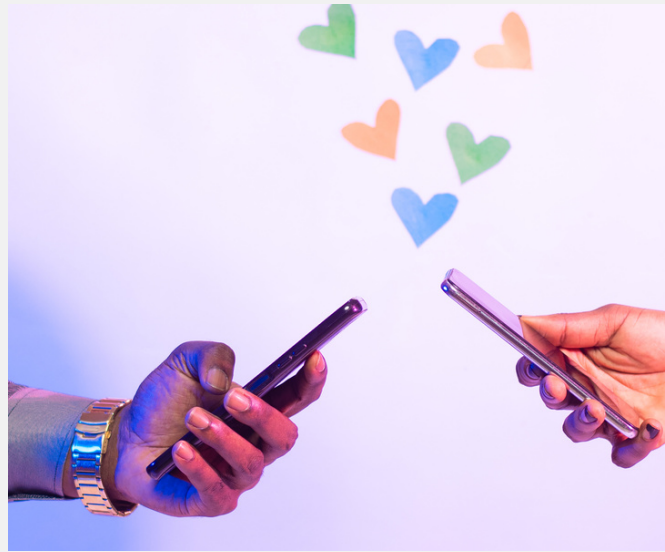
If someone asks you on a date, you can say “NO”

If you do not want to date someone, you should say “no” when they ask you on a date.

You have a right to say no, and they have a right to know the truth. It is okay to say “Thank you for asking. I am not interested in going on a date with you.” If you feel unsafe saying no, you can ask someone you trust for help.

Online Dating

- Online dating has become very common--a lot of people meet romantic partners on the internet!
- You might meet someone through a dating app, in a chatroom, or through a video game you play online.
- Online dating can be a great way to meet people you would not be able to meet in person.
- But meeting someone online can also be dangerous if they are not being honest about who they are.



How to Stay Safe

When you meet someone online, you should be friends **first**. It is not safe to start a relationship with someone you meet online right away.

Get to know them through more than just chatting. You can do voice or video calls online. Seeing someone's face will help you make sure they are who they say they are and will help you to get to know them better.

Tell other people you trust about your new online friend. Especially if you are talking about being in a romantic relationship or meeting in person.

If you are going to meet them in person, consider taking a friend or someone else you trust with you. Double dates are fun, and can help keep you safe!

Tell someone you trust where you are going and give them your date's information--name, phone number, address of the date, time of the date, etc. so they can help you stay safe.

Do not give someone you meet online any personal information until you know them really well. Your phone number, home address, and financial information are private and should only be shared with people you know and trust.

Dating and Relationships Should be for Everyone!

Everyone gets a little nervous about dating, but relationships should be fun too! You can always ask someone you trust for support if you need it.

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Seattle Children's Alyssa Burnett
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UW Medicine
HARBORVIEW
MEDICAL CENTER

To contact the Harborview Abuse & Trauma Center:

Call: (206)744-1600
Washington Relay Service: 1-800-833-6388
Llamar: (206) 520-5222
Visit: www.uwhatc.org