

# Promoting Healthy TEEN DATING RELATIONSHIPS

You play an important role in teaching your teen about healthy relationships by providing guidance and support, engaging in ongoing conversations, and by modeling them in your own relationships.

## Characteristics of a healthy dating relationship

Engage in ongoing conversations with your teen about healthy dating relationships using the following questions as guidance:

### Honesty and Trust

Do you trust your boyfriend or girlfriend and believe they trust you? Are they always honest and open with you? Honesty and trust are the foundation of every healthy relationship.

### Communication

Do you talk face-to-face (not just through text) about your thoughts and feelings with mutual respect? Effective communication is essential to every healthy relationship.

### Privacy

Does your boyfriend or girlfriend allow you to use your phone, email, and social media without checking them or asking for the passwords? You are entitled to your own privacy.

### Independence

Do you feel comfortable being yourself and spending time with other people doing things you love? You can have your own friendships, family relationships and personal space.

### Equality

Do you have equal say in your relationship from the activities you do together to the friends you hang out with? Healthy relationships involve equal partners.

### Safety

Do you feel emotionally and physically safe in your relationship? This means you can be yourself without fear of being put down, pressured into unwanted physical contact, or physically harmed. A healthy relationship should always make you feel safe.

### Support

Does your boyfriend or girlfriend care for you and want what's best for you? People in healthy relationships feel cared for, listened to, encouraged, and emotionally supported.

### Respect

Do you feel comfortable expressing boundaries without feeling guilty or afraid? You should never feel pressured to do something you aren't comfortable with, such as drinking, drugs, or unwanted physical contact.

1 in 4



ND High School students (27.2%) have experienced controlling behavior or emotional abuse in their dating relationships

YRBS, 2017

## Strategies for encouraging healthy relationships

1

Start the conversation and really listen. Having important conversations about healthy relationships early and often will build a positive connection that can empower your teen to recognize when something isn't right.

2

Be a strong voice and their best excuse. Clearly express family values and expectations related to sexual activity, drugs, alcohol, and dating. Let them fall back on you as an excuse not to put themselves in risky situations.

3

Use teachable moments. Ask your teen their opinion about unhealthy relationship messages in music lyrics or on TV and movies. Use these examples of unhealthy relationships or behaviors to guide discussion about why they're unhealthy and to reinforce your family values and expectations.

4

Get to know your teen's friends and dating partners. Welcome them into your home for dinner, family time, or movie night. Observe how the guests behave in your presence and how your teen behaves when they're around. Afterwards, use the experience as an open door to discuss your teen's relationships.

5

Encourage and model safe and healthy relationships. Your teen learns what to expect and how to act in their relationships by observing yours. Discuss what a healthy relationship looks like, feels like, and sounds like.



### If you or your teen are in an abusive or unsafe relationship, get help now.

- Call the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at 1-888-293-6118
- Visit [loveisrespect.org](https://loveisrespect.org) to chat with someone online
- Text LOVEIS to 22522 \*Message and data rates apply for text help services