



## Relationships

### What are Relationships?

- Relationships are connections between people
- People have many kinds of relationships in their lives



- Some examples of the kinds of relationships people may have are:

- Friends
- Best friends
- Parent or caregiver and child
- Siblings
- Romantic partners
- Sexual partners
- Spouses
- Friends with benefits
- Hook-ups
- Teacher and student
- Coworkers
- Teammates
- Roommates
- Doctor and patient
- Counsellor and service user





# Healthy Relationships, Sexuality & Autism

Developed by: **Autism Nova Scotia**

## Healthy Relationships versus Unhealthy Relationships

- It is important to know that healthy and unhealthy relationships exist in all different kinds of relationships, not just in romantic or sexual relationships



### Healthy Relationships

- In healthy relationships all of the people involved create a space where everyone feels respected, cared for, supported, and valued by the other person
- Healthy relationships provide people a safe space to be themselves and bring pleasure and joy to their own and each other's lives



### Unhealthy Relationships

- In unhealthy relationships, healthy characteristics are lacking or do not exist
- People in unhealthy relationships do not feel respected, supported, or valued by the other person, and they may feel unsafe







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These are healthy or unhealthy characteristics to be aware of in any kind of relationship. This includes friendships, family, romantic partners, sexual partners, coworkers, teammates, teachers, bosses, etc.

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

You and the other person listen to and respect one another.

You and the other person give each other space to spend time with family, friends and romantic partner(s).

You and the other person have fun spending time together.

You and the other person are comfortable telling each other when something is upsetting, or when something upsets you/them.

You and the other person feel comfortable sharing feelings and thoughts with one another.

You and the other person are proud of the other's accomplishments and successes.

You and the other person respect each other's differences.

## UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

You and the other person do not listen to or respect one another.

You and/or the other person are jealous of the other spending time with family, friends and romantic partner(s).

You and/or the other person do not have fun spending time together. You/they only do what the other person wants because you/they are afraid they will not like you, or they are afraid you will not like them.

You and/or the other person are afraid of telling each other when something upsets you/them.

You and/or the other person keep feelings and thoughts private because of a lack of trust in the other person.

You and/or the other person are jealous of the other's accomplishments and successes.

You and/or the other person are physically, emotionally, or verbally aggressive.

In addition to the list above covering all types of relationships, these are healthy or unhealthy characteristics to be aware of in a sexual relationship.

## HEALTHY SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

You and your partner(s) can talk about birth control and safer sex practices.

You and your partner(s) can tell each other what you like and do not like sexually.

## UNHEALTHY SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

You and/or your partner(s) do not talk about birth control and safer sex practices.

You and/or your partner(s) keep your sexual likes and dislikes secret because you/they are afraid of the other person's reactions.





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## Are You in an Unhealthy Relationship?

- If you think you may be in an unhealthy relationship, talk to someone you trust about it. This could be a friend, family member, doctor, counsellor, clergy person, or mentor.
- If you do not have someone you trust to talk to, you can call an anonymous telephone mental health line for support.
- Sometimes the healthiest option is to end an unhealthy relationship immediately, and that is okay.
- Sometimes people may work together (sometimes with the help of a counsellor or therapist) to try and change an unhealthy relationship into a healthy relationship.
  - This takes work and the people need to be equally committed to making positive change with the goal of building trust, respect, care for the other person(s), support for the other person(s), and creating a safe space for each other.
  - Sometimes people work together to try to create a healthy relationship but realize they are not a good match for one another because they want different things from the relationship. They may decide it is best to end the relationship, and that is okay.



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### References

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