

Developing Healthy Relationships

We all are in relationships of one kind or another. Relationships can make us feel whole and happy. But relationships also take a certain amount of work. This brief article provides some actionable steps you can take to develop healthy relationships.

Relationships are not perfect.

Feeling angry, hurt, or upset at times is normal. Feeling scared, humiliated, pressured, or controlled is not the way a relationship should make you feel. Instead, you should feel loved, respected and free to be yourself.

Action Step: Support your significant other through the language you use and the actions you take. Respect your partner and your partner's decisions. Never force someone to engage in an activity that they don't want to do.

Talk with each other.

Communication is essential in healthy relationships. People should take time to talk with each other, respect each others' opinions and feel comfortable asking each other questions.

Action Step: Take time to talk and listen. Express your thoughts and feelings clearly and directly, without intentionally hurting or disrespecting each other.

Family matters.

Families are an important part of everyone's lives. Family members help shape beliefs, provide support, and can serve as role models. Actions with intent to abuse, humiliate, harass, or degrade another leads to unhealthy relationships. Children learn what they see and hear. They need to learn that violence is not acceptable at any time and that there are healthy ways to settle a disagreement.

Action Step: Simple changes in the way you act in front of your children can make a difference. For instance, speak up when you see your son or daughter mistreat others physically or emotionally. Talk to your children about what it means to be in a healthy relationship where people do not hurt each other physically, sexually or emotionally.

Friends count.

Friends are an important source of support and advice. Friends play a powerful role in shaping attitudes, beliefs and behaviors about violence. Friends should speak up when they know of or see that a friend may be in an unhealthy relationship. Talk with each about other what it means to give and receive respect.

Action Step: Friends should not accept excuses for violent acts committed by people they love. Confront the abuser--only if you can do it safely. Let the abuser know you don't approve of the behavior, and discuss changes that can be made to have more productive, healthy relationships.¹

Building Blocks.

Trust, honesty and respect among friends, family, and others play critical roles in healthy relationships. Never ignore protests and respect your partner's right to say "no" to things that cause discomfort.

¹ Golding, J.M., Wilsnack, S.C., & Cooper, M.L. (2002). Sexual assault history and social support: Six general population studies. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 15*(3), 187-197.

Action Step: Treat your wife, husband, boyfriend, girlfriend, friends and family with the same trust, honesty, and respect that you would want.

Violence is never okay.

Intentional violence is never the victim's fault. Violence doesn't always mean physical abuse. Abusive relationships can occur anytime someone intentionally attacks you physically, sexually, or psychologically. Abuse is never okay. Never make light of abuse or try to justify or excuse violent behavior by blaming the victim.

Action Step: Express your thoughts and feelings clearly, directly and respectfully.

You Are Not Alone

If you are in an unhealthy relationship, your program is here to help. Speak with a professional that can connect you with the help and resources you need to protect yourself. To learn more, log on to www.MagellanHealth.com/member to access information, self-assessments and resources.