

Healthy, Unhealthy and Abusive Relationships

Estimated activity time: 20 minutes (minimum)

This activity aims to encourage young people to explore what kinds of things (behaviour, words, situations, etc.) are ok, or not ok, in a healthy relationship.

In the context of this activity the following definitions apply:

- 'Healthy' means the situation on the card is something that belongs in, or would build, a healthy relationship. It's something that would make a relationship feel enjoyable and safe. We might say the person or their behaviour is 'green flag'.
- Unhealthy' means the situation on the card doesn't belong in or create a healthy relationship. It's something that would cause hurt or harm to a partner. make the relationship feel It's a situation where partners should pause and have conversations about what the behaviour was, how it made them feel and what changes are needed.
- 'Abusive' means the situation on the card is harmful for the person. The situation causes physical or emotional pain, fear, prevents the person from doing something, or from being able to have privacy and freedom to be themselves. We might say the person or behaviour is 'red flag'.

Wellbeing and further support

This activity has the potential to trigger questions or worries about the young people's own relationships or of those they care about. It may remind them of an unhealthy relationship they or their loved ones have experienced. Or they may be worried about a prospective or current partner's behaviour, or their own behaviour.

Before you begin the activity, consider providing a content warning such as 'this activity talks about some situations that aren't kind or healthy in a relationship. Come and talk to me or another trusted adult if you have any questions or worries'.

End the activity by reminding the group that they can speak to a trusted adult about any questions or worries they have, and signpost them to relevant resources or sources of support (Appendix 2).

Materials required: set of situation cards, 'healthy, unhealthy, abusive' sheet and the support and resources sheet (See appendices 1 and 2) for each group

Activity instructions

- split larger groups into small groups or pairs
- give each group a set of situation cards, the 'healthy, unhealthy, abusive' sheet and the support and resources sheet (See appendices 1 and 2)
- explain what 'healthy', 'unhealthy' and 'abusive' mean in the context of this activity
- Ask groups/pairs to discuss each card and place it under 'healthy', 'unhealthy' or 'abusive'. If they are unsure about whether or not the behaviour is healthy, unhealthy or abusive, ask them to place the card aside.
- when all groups have placed their cards, come back together into the large group and discuss. Some ways to do this are:
 - have each group read out which ones they placed in each category and compare across groups
 - read out each card and ask where the groups placed it
- help the group reflect on their thinking and decisions
 - ask how/why they came to their decisions, especially where there is disagreement or where young people define some behaviour as unhealthy/abusive
 - ask if they would change any after hearing wider discussions
 - what might they say to a friend experiencing an 'unhealthy' or 'abusive' situation?
- unpick what might make it easier for people to identify signs of more/less healthy relationship situations in 'real life' relationships

Variation: If you want to get the group moving, create healthy, unhealthy and abusive areas of the room. Give each young person a card and ask them to read out the statement. The group should then discuss the behaviour and ask the YP to move to one of the areas – or stay in the middle if they cannot reach a consensus.

Summing up the activity

Highlight that some behaviour can be viewed differently based on the context.

There are some 'answers' paired with the cards you can use, but some people may disagree with these.

This activity highlights that what we are happy to accept in a relationship can vary and that negotiating relationships is an important skill to learn.

It can also highlight that some young people see behaviour as healthy that is actually quite concerning. Recent research shows that many young women do not identify behaviour that is unhealthy or abusive. See following article for more information.

<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/reports/a20072270/domestic-abuse-relationships-cosmopolitan-uk-womens-aid-research/>

End the activity by reminding the group that they can speak to a trusted adult if they have any questions or worries after doing this activity and show the 'support and resources' sheet (Appendix 2).

1: Your partner tells you how special you are and how much they care about you.

1: Healthy: Everyone wants to be loved and cared for by their partner. Because a relationship consists of two people, it is important that each person knows how much the other means to them.

2: Your partner uses a name or pronoun that you don't like but stops using it once you correct them or ask them not to.

2: Healthy: Even in healthy relationships, we can mess up and do something upsetting. In a healthy relationship, you should feel comfortable telling your partner when something upsets you and they should take it seriously and work with you to ensure your safety and happiness.

3: You and your partner have an argument and they give you the silent treatment for days afterwards.

3: Unhealthy: The silent treatment only leaves room for more confusion. There will be days that you and your partner disagree on some things, and it is important that you keep your communication strong. It's not right for you or your partner to hold grudges. And silence alone is unhealthy for any relationship.

4: Your partner appreciates your passions and encourages you to do the things you love.

4: Healthy: The things you enjoy should be important to your partner even if they are not the same as what they enjoy. They should always encourage you to do what makes you happy.

5: You miss your partner when you go on vacation with your family but you have a really good time anyway.

5: Healthy: Sometimes, you just need a break and going away on vacation is a great way to take one. Your partner should understand that. Of course, you may miss them, but you realize and appreciate all the fun you are having anyway.

6: Your partner controls your Facebook and other social media accounts.

6: Abusive: what you say and do on your social media should be your business. Your partner shouldn't have a say on who you follow, what you post or who leaves you a message.

7: Your partner says you don't really love them because you want to go to a movie with a friend instead of spending time alone with them.

7: Unhealthy: It is not ok if your partner makes you feel bad or guilty for wanting to hang out with a friend. In a healthy relationship, your partner respects and trusts you when you are out with your friends and doesn't make you feel like you constantly have to prove your love.

8: After an argument, your partner blocks the doorway and takes your keys to prevent you from leaving.

8: Abusive: Blocking your way like that is emotional abuse. While someone's physical safety may be threatened they're not physically being assaulted, the effect is not physical harm but it has a very emotional impact.

9: You always feel like your partner's wishes and goals come first.

9: Unhealthy: Compromise is the key to a healthy relationship and when your wishes differ from that of your partner, there should be compromise. Healthy relationships don't feel one sided. They feel as though both partners are important and matter in the relationship.

10: Your partner randomly stops by your job/college/gym etc. even though you told them that it made you uncomfortable.

10: Abusive: Anytime a partner continues to do something after you tell them it makes you uncomfortable, they are being abusive.

11: You and your partner agree to take the night off from texting or calling each other, but while you're out with your friends your partner calls and texts you multiple times to say they miss you.

11: Unhealthy: When you make an agreement with someone, they should respect that agreement. It is important that you and your partner respect one another's space and the agreements you make with each other.

12: Your partner refuses to spend time with your family, but expects that you spend time with theirs.

12: Unhealthy: Your partner should respect your decision to spend time with others, especially your family or friends. Spending time with each other's families is part of building a strong relationship so it's important for partners to do this equally.

13: Your partner threatens to tell other people about your sex life or share private photos or texts.

13: Abusive: You have a right to privacy and if your partner threatens to expose parts of you or your relationship as a way to control your actions, that is abuse. If a partner shares intimate images of you this is against the law.

14: You had a really good day and can't wait to tell your partner because you know they will be excited to hear about it.

14: Healthy: Your partner should feel that your happiness is important and enjoy hearing about your day, even when it's just going over your daily routine.

15: Your partner gives you gifts but demands something in return, like money or sexual acts.

15: Abusive: Gifts should not come with expectations, particularly of sexual acts that may make the other partner uncomfortable or that they're not ready for. Demanding this type of repayment is abusive. It could be grooming or sexual exploitation.

16: Your partner texts you more than you want them to and gets angry if you don't respond.

16: Unhealthy: Everybody deserves space even from their dating partner. Feeling as though you don't have enough is a sign of an unhealthy relationship.

17: Your partner demands access to your bank account.

17: Abusive: You have the right to keep some things private. You have the right to be fully in control of your finances and a partner does not have the right to check your bank accounts or control what you spend.

18: When you go to your favorite restaurant and order something different, your partner acts disgusted and calls you stupid for ordering it.

18: Abusive: No matter how healthy the relationship, no two people will always like all the same things. But name-calling is an abusive behaviour and unnecessarily hurtful.

19: Your partner tells you they wouldn't hit you if you just did things the right way.

19: Abusive: It is never okay for someone to hit or physically hurt their partner and it is abusive for the person who was violent to blame their behaviour on their victim.

20: You and your partner feel like you can share things with each other, but you also feel like you can keep some things private.

20: Healthy: You and your partner should have enough respect for one another where you understand what information should be shared— such as hobbies and mutual interests -- and what should not be shared – like passwords and codes to bank accounts.



Healthy

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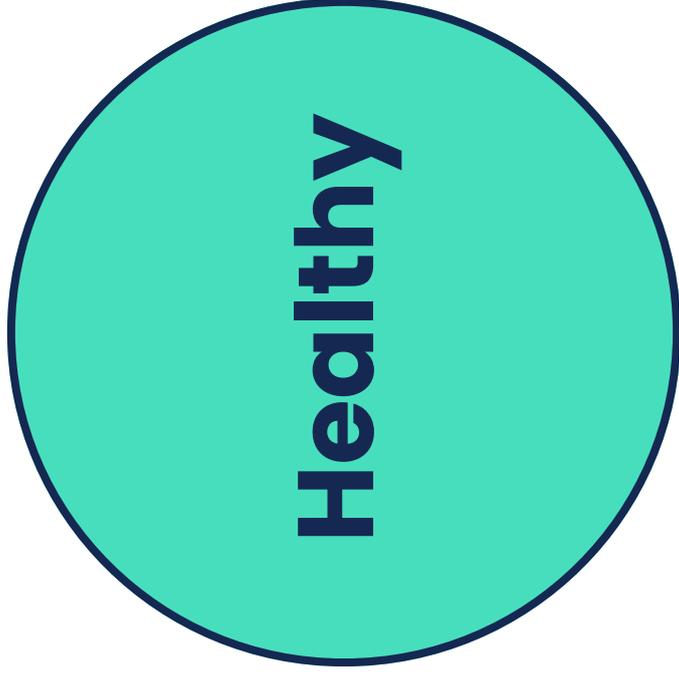
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Appendix 2

Wellbeing and further support

Talking about healthy and unhealthy relationships can sometimes bring up questions or worries. Some of the things you and the group talked about while doing the activity might have made you think about your own relationships, or maybe the relationships that people you care about are in. It might have made you question or worry about a partner's behaviour, or maybe your own.

Here are some things that might answer your questions or help with any worries you have.

- You could talk to an adult you trust, maybe a:
 - teacher
 - parent
 - youth worker
 - school nurse
 - someone at your local Healthy Respect drop in
www.healthyrespect.co.uk/find-services-near-me/
- You can get more information about relationships on Healthy Respect's website: www.healthyrespect.co.uk/something-else-is-on-my-mind/relationships/