



Warning signs of an unhealthy relationship

Key Facts and Discussion

Facilitators' Guide

Do you know the warning signs of unhealthy relationships?

All relationships have their ups and downs, but unhealthy relationships often include set patterns of behaviour and can sometimes escalate into emotional or physical abuse. Have you been worried that your relationship, or one of your friend's relationships, isn't healthy? Here we look at a few of the warning signs:

1. Your partner attempts to exercise control and ultimately, power, over you.
Whether they do this physically, emotionally, by what they say to you, or online through Whatsapp and Facebook, this is NOT ok.
2. They pressure you to send intimate photo messages or snapchat messages that you don't want to send.
This is NOT ok - and you don't know what they might do with them.
3. Your partner is very controlling, for example trying to control how your hair looks, where you go, who you see, or what you do.
This is NOT healthy.
4. You don't feel able or willing to communicate with your partner.
This is NOT healthy, but a breakdown in communication can sometimes be the simplest thing to fix, and can do the most good for your relationship.
5. Your partner is being repeatedly dishonest.
This is NOT ok. Healthy relationships are built on trust and respect.
6. They call you names, constantly question and criticise your choices and decisions.
This is NOT healthy.

7. You don't feel you have any control over whether you use contraceptives to avoid pregnancy and don't feel able to insist on safer sex to avoid HIV and STIs.
No partner should feel pressured into doing something they don't want to do, so this is NOT ok.
8. You don't feel able to go out and see your friends without the other person being angry or sad or jealous.
Too much dependency on one another and isolation from social circles is NOT healthy. In a loving relationship you will want to spend a lot of time together, but you are your own person and can maintain a level of independence.
9. You are made to feel guilty for the choices that you make.
This is NOT ok. Abusive relationships are often hinged on manipulation and ensuring that the other person feels guilt.

Ideas for discussion

What do you (or your group) know about unhealthy relationships? Maybe you've never really thought about it before. Here are some questions to think about yourself, or discuss in your group.

1. Do you have fixed ideas about relationships? Do you think there are set rules for good and bad relationships?

FACILITATORS' NOTES

No relationship is the same – so the group may concentrate on behaviours (good and bad). Remember that manipulative and controlling behaviour can come from both men and women, and occur in exclusive and open relationships.

2. Your partner should have many of the same qualities that you see/look for in your own friends – what are the most important qualities of your closest friends?

FACILITATORS' NOTES

Your friends make you laugh; you feel free around them; you can be yourself; they are trustworthy, etc.

3. How do you think you might tell the difference between a relationship that is going through a difficult patch, and one that is just unhealthy?

FACILITATORS' NOTES

Look out for issues such as being too scared to communicate; that you fear the physical actions of the other; feeling closed off from your friends and family; being made to feel constantly guilty for your everyday actions.

4. Do you think there are ways of behaving that are never part of a healthy relationship?

FACILITATORS' NOTES

Groups might explore issues such as physical violence; mental and emotional abuse; making someone have sex without a condom; pressing them when they say no to something; stopping your partner seeing friends/family.

5. How do you think being in an unhealthy relationship could affect your sexual health?

FACILITATORS' NOTES

The group might discuss issues around the power dynamics of relationships that make them feel unable to ask to use a condom, talk about contraceptive methods, or taking control of their own sexual health more generally. These dynamics might also affect whether they feel they can be open about their HIV status.