

Whether you are dating someone new or have been married for decades, you always deserve to be loved and respected for being you.

What is a HEALTHY relationship?

No matter how long you have been together, you and your partner listen to one another and only engage in sexual activity that you both agree to.

Even if you disagree or have a fight, you always treat each other with respect.

Your partner supports you through tough times.

You trust each other to do what is right for the other person.

You are honest with each other.

You have your own friends and activities separate from one another, as well as those that you share.

You can be open and direct without fear of retaliation or manipulation.

You and your partner are equals and make decisions together about finances, big life changes, and family matters.

Community resources are here to help. Rape Crisis Centers offer crisis intervention, counseling, advocacy, and legal services.

Resources

Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)

www.mcasa.org/survivors

Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI)

301-565-2277

Toll-Free: 1-877-496-7254

Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV)

www.mnadv.org

National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)

www.nnedv.org

National Domestic Violence 24/7 Hotline

1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)

TTY: 1-800-787-3224

Text 'START' to 88788



Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

mcasa.org | 301-328-7023 | info@mcasa.org

P.O. Box 8782

Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

Reprinting of this document was supported by grant #CDC-RFA-CE-24-0027 and the MDH Rape & Sexual Assault Prevention #PHPA-2795, and preparation was supported by the CDC under grant number #PHPA-G2093 awarded by the Center for Injury and Sexual Assault Prevention, Maryland Department of Health. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 9/2025

Healthy Relationships Throughout Life



At every age, we deserve respect, love, and safety in our relationships.



What is an UNHEALTHY relationship?

Partners cannot communicate openly and honestly with one another.

A partner focuses all their time and energy on the other, and neglects himself.

A partner is always making excuses for the inappropriate behavior of the other.

A partner wants the other to change to meet their standards.

A partner is isolated from friends and family, spending all of their time with the other partner.

What is an ABUSIVE relationship?

It involves any kind of physical, sexual, mental, emotional, or financial harm. This also includes any harm to children or pets.

A partner has to justify where they go, who they see, and what they do in-person and online.

A partner makes all the decisions and controls all aspects of the relationship.

A partner denies causing harm and minimizes the feelings and experiences of others in the relationship.

Relationships change.

Relationships evolve over time, and partners' needs and desires may change as they grow older. It is important that partners are aware of each other's changing needs. Being direct and honest about changes in sexuality, mental health, and other needs is essential.

Recognize warning signs.

Some relationships are just unhealthy, they are not necessarily dangerous or abusive. However, it is important to understand unhealthy relationships can easily spiral into abusive relationships. The unhealthy behaviors may not seem like a big deal at first, but they are often extensions of power and control. Physical, sexual, mental, emotional, and financial abuse are unacceptable.

Help a friend in an unhealthy relationship.

Your friend may not ask you for help. You may be thinking *it's none of my business*, or, *if it were that bad, wouldn't they already have done something?* Sexual and domestic violence is everyone's business. Ending an unhealthy relationship can be dangerous, and survivors often aren't able to ask for the support they may need. Take the first step by reaching out privately to your friend about your concerns.



If a friend confides in you, listen and offer support.

Do not place blame on your friend, and never underestimate the danger they may be in. Your friend may be keeping quiet to stay safe, or to keep children or pets safe. It is important to listen to concerns about avoiding danger.

Support your friend. Remind them of what makes them special and stress that they deserve a life free from sexual and domestic violence. If they decline your help, tell them you'll always be there for them.

Set children up for successful, healthy futures by teaching them to ask before touching others, and that others should get their permission to touch them.

Healthy relationships start young.