

Fact sheet

What is a healthy relationship?

How can I tell if my relationship is healthy, unhealthy or abusive?

Maintaining a healthy relationship takes time, energy and care. Healthy relationships make everyone feel respected, happy and safe. The chart will help you compare healthy relationships to unhealthy or abusive ones.

	Healthy Relationship	Unhealthy Relationship	Abusive Relationship
Sharing Feelings	You feel safe and strong enough to tell your partner how you really feel.	You feel awkward telling your partner how you really feel.	You are afraid to tell your partner how you really feel because you fear getting put down or threatened.
Communicating	You respect and listen to each other even when you have differing opinions on a topic.	Your partner ignores you and does not respect your opinions when there is a difference of opinion.	Your partner treats you with disrespect and ignores or makes fun of your ideas and feelings.
Disagreements	You can have disagreements and still talk respectfully to each other. You resolve your disagreements.	Your disagreements often turn into fights.	You are afraid to disagree because you do not want to unleash your partner's anger and violence. The disagreement is an excuse for abuse.
Intimacy and Sex	Both of you can be honest about your feelings about physical affection and sex. Neither of you feels pressured to do anything you do not want to do.	You are embarrassed to say how you feel because you think your partner may not listen or care. You "go along" with some things.	Your partner ignores your needs and wants. Your partner pushes you into situations that make you uncomfortable, frighten or degrade you.
Trust	You trust each other. You are comfortable with your partner spending time with other people.	Your partner feels jealous when you talk to other people. You feel jealous when your partner talks to other people.	Your partner accuses you of flirting or having an affair, and orders you not to talk to others.
Time Alone	You can each spend time alone and consider this a healthy part of your relationship.	You think there may be something wrong if you want to do things without your partner. Your partner tries to keep you to themself.	Your partner does not allow you to spend time doing things on your own. Your partner sees this as a challenge or threat to your relationship.
Violence	You and your partner take care not to speak harsh words or make mean comments. There is no physical violence in your relationship.	There have been a few incidents of emotional abuse or controlling behaviour in your relationship. There is no pattern of abuse or violence.	There is a pattern of increasing, ongoing abuse in your relationship: emotional, physical, sexual and/or intimidation.

If you are in an abusive relationship:

Make sure you and your children are safe

Visit alberta.ca/EndFamilyViolence for information on safety.

Make sure you are safe

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

Call the Family Violence Info Line at 310-1818 for 24/7 help in over 170 languages.

Go to alberta.ca/SafetyChat to chat with the Family Violence Info Line staff.

Know you are not responsible for the abuse

Abuse is never the victim's fault. Abuse can happen to people of all ages, abilities, cultural and spiritual backgrounds, gender identities and sexual orientations. Abuse can happen when you least expect it.

Understand that the abuse and violence will likely continue without intervention

Abuse and violence usually become more frequent and more severe over time. When you are thinking about your choices, be as realistic as you can be in determining what the risks are in your situation.

Tell someone you trust

Secrecy gives abuse more power. When you tell another person, you are using your power to improve the situation. Tell someone who will listen and offer support. Keep telling people you trust until you get the help that you need.

Find people and resources to support you

You are not alone. Others have had this experience and lived through it. Once you start looking for sources of help, you will meet people who understand your situation and can help you learn more about available resources.

Get professional help

Contact a qualified counsellor that understands abuse and violence in intimate relationships. If the first counsellor is not a good fit, try someone else. People who work in the area of family violence may be able to help you find an appropriate counsellor.

Care for yourself

Keeping yourself and others safe requires a lot of energy. Self care is important to renew your energy and stay connected to others who may help when you need them.

Spend time with supportive people

Being with supportive people and fostering healthy relationships will be a rewarding experience and will give you a support network in times of need.

Help is available

See what supports are available in your community by visiting alberta.ca/Family-Violence-Find-Supports.aspx.

Get support

Visit alberta.ca/EndFamilyViolence for information and supports for the costs of leaving.

Visit alberta.ca/Shelters.

Even if you do not plan to stay at your local shelter, you can call them for help.

The Family Violence Info Line (310-1818) can help in all these areas.