

Know Your Relationship Rights

You have rights in your relationship. Everyone does, and those rights can help you set boundaries that should be respected by both partners in a healthy relationship.

- You have the right to privacy, both online and off
- You have the right to feel safe and respected
- You have the right to decide who you want to date or not date
- You have the right to choose when/if you have sex and who you have sex with
- You have the right to say no at any time (to sex, to drugs or alcohol, to a relationship), even if you've said yes before
- You have the right to hang out with your friends and family and do things you enjoy, without your partner getting jealous or controlling
- You have the right to end a relationship that isn't right or healthy for you
- You have the right to live free from violence and abuse

Relationships exist on a spectrum, from healthy to unhealthy to abusive -- and everywhere in between. It can be hard to determine where your relationship falls, especially if you haven't dated a lot. Explore this section to learn the basics of dating, healthy relationships and drawing the line before abuse starts.

Is My Relationship Healthy?

In a healthy relationship:

- Your partner respects you and your individuality.
- You are both open and honest.
- Your partner supports you and your choices even when they disagree with you.
- Both of you have equal say and respected boundaries.
- Your partner understands that you need to study or hang out with friends or family.
- You can communicate your feelings without being afraid of negative consequences.
- Both of you feel safe being open and honest.

A good partner is not excessively jealous and does not make you feel guilty when you spend time with family and friends. A good partner also compliments you, encourages you to achieve your goals and does not resent your accomplishments.

My Partner Doesn't Physically Hurt Me

Just because there is no physical abuse in your relationship doesn't mean it's healthy. It's not healthy if your partner:

- Is inconsiderate, disrespectful or distrustful.
- Doesn't communicate their feelings.
- Tries to emotionally or financially control you by placing your money in their banking account.
- Keeps you from getting a job or gets you fired.
- Humiliates you on Facebook or in front of your friends.
- Threatens to out you to your family.

So, Is My Relationship Unhealthy?

Everybody deserves to be in a healthy relationship free from violence. Drawing the line between unhealthy and abusive can be hard. If you think your relationship is going in the wrong direction, check out the warning signs of abuse at loveisrespect.org.

Remember, there are many types of abuse and while you may think some of them are normal -- they are not. Even though teen and 20-something relationships may be different from adult ones, young people do experience the same types of physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse that adults do. You should take violence in your relationship seriously.

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If you think you are in an abusive relationship, you're probably feeling confused about what to do. You may fear what your partner will do if you leave or how your friends and family will react when you tell them. If you are financially or physically dependent on your partner, leaving may feel impossible. You may also think that the police and other adults won't take you seriously.

These are all understandable reasons to feel nervous about leaving your partner, but staying in the abusive relationship isn't your only option.

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What Should I Look for in a Partner?



Relationships require respect, trust and open communication. Whether you're looking for a relationship or are already in one, make sure you and your partner agree on what makes a relationship healthy. It's not always easy, but you can build a healthy relationship. Look for someone who will:

- Treat you with respect.
- Doesn't make fun of things you like or want to do.
- Never puts you down.
- Doesn't get angry if you spend time with your friends or family.
- Listens to your ideas and compromises sometimes.
- Isn't excessively negative.
- Shares some of your interests such as movies, sports, reading, dancing or music.
- Isn't afraid to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Is comfortable around your friends and family.
- Is proud of your accomplishments and successes.
- Respects your boundaries and does not abuse technology.
- Doesn't require you to "check in" or need to know where you are all the time.
- Is caring and honest.
- Doesn't pressure you to do things that you don't want to do.
- Doesn't constantly accuse you of cheating or being unfaithful.
- Encourages you to do well in school or at work.
- Doesn't threaten you or make you feel scared.
- Understands the importance of healthy relationships.

Remember that a relationship consists of two people. Both you and your partner should have equal say and should never be afraid to express how you feel. It's not just about speaking up for yourself -- you should also listen and seriously consider what your partner says.

Every relationship has arguments and disagreements sometimes -- this is normal. How you choose to deal with your disagreements is what really counts. Both people should work hard to communicate effectively.

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Check-ins



There are many situations where it's not only fun but practical to check-in with Gowalla, foursquare, Facebook, etc. As useful as this technology is, did you ever stop to wonder, is it safe?

For someone in or getting out of an abusive relationship, the answer is often no. It can be dangerous if your abusive partner only has to log-in to foursquare or Facebook to see where you are, what you're doing and who you're with.

So try to be mindful of how to use check-ins -- whether you're in a healthy relationship or not. If you or a friend are in an unhealthy relationship, consider the following before checking in:

Always Ask

Always ask everyone if it's alright to check them in, even if you are sure it was ok a week ago. If anyone in your group says no, consider playing it safe and not checking in at all. You don't want an abusive partner figuring out who else is there based on the group you posted.

Update Your Privacy Settings

Facebook, foursquare and Gowalla all let you control who sees your check-ins, but they default to making your account public. Consider adjusting your settings so only your friends, not the general public, can see your check-ins. Remember, though, that abusive partners may find a way around your settings.

Know Your Networks

Just because you're not friends with the abusive person doesn't mean you're not friends with their friends. If you think sensitive information could be accessed by your contacts a few friends away, just side with caution and don't post.

Pay Attention to Statuses and Tweets Too

Be aware that tagging someone in a status or tweet could create problems for them too, especially if you give away their location. Learn more about social networking safety.

Wait Until After the Event

If you're posting about a one-time event that you really want to celebrate online, give it a day or two until you mention it. That way, the abusive person is less likely to use the information against you and your friends.

If you want to talk about cautious check-ins or other ways to support a friend in an abusive relationship, chat with a peer advocate at loveisrespect.org.

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LGBTQ Abusive Relationships



Everybody deserves a safe and healthy relationship. You may think same-sex couples cannot be in abusive relationships because they are the same gender. That's not true. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) youth experience dating abuse at the same rates and in similar ways as heterosexual couples do. In fact, one in three young people -- straight, gay and everyone in between -- experience some form of dating abuse.

Obstacles for LGBTQ Youth to Get Help

Many LGBTQ teens and 20-somethings believe that no one will help them because they are transgender or in a same-sex relationship. If you're LGBTQ, you may face additional obstacles when asking for help:

- **Shame or Embarrassment.** You may be struggling with your own internalized homophobia or shame about your sexual orientation or gender-identity. Your abusive partner may attempt to use this shame to exert power and control over you.
- **Fear of not Being Believed or Taken Seriously.** You may worry that if you report abuse, you will encounter common stereotypes like violence between LGBTQ partners is always mutual, abuse doesn't occur in lesbian relationships, only the physically bigger partner can be abusive or LGBTQ relationships are inherently unhealthy. Your partner may exploit this fear, trying to convince you that no one will take an LGBTQ victim seriously.
- **Fear of Retaliation, Harassment, Rejection or Bullying.** If you are not yet "out" to everyone, your abusive dating partner may threaten to tell your secret to people who will make your life more difficult once they know. You may also fear that seeking help will make you a target of public ridicule, retaliation, harassment or bullying. Your abusive partner may exploit these fears to isolate you and keep you in the relationship.
- **Less Legal Protection.** You may be unaware that you have legal options for protection -- including obtaining a restraining or protective order. Although laws vary from state to state, and some specifically restrict restraining orders to heterosexual couples, most states have gender-neutral laws that do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Learn about your state's laws at loveisrespect.org.

Regardless of these obstacles, you deserve to be safe and healthy. We can help. Visit loveisrespect.org to chat with a peer advocate for more information.

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