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Remember the first time someone called you their "partner" and you had no idea if they meant relationship partner or lab partner? Yeah. We've all been there. And that's why understand what is a relationship can be so confusing. Whether it's changing a relationship status, getting butterflies over a Snapchat streak, or lying in bed wondering if texting every night means you're dating or just... emotionally entangled, relationships can feel confusing, especially when you're new to them. [Read: Snapstreak Rules & Must-Know Emojis] You might be a teenager wondering if your first crush is the real deal. Or a college student who just realized you've been in a situationship for six months without a DTR talk. Either way, you're not alone. Let's break down what a relationship really means, no psych degree required, just a little curiosity and an open heart. At its core, a relationship is any connection between two people, emotional, romantic, platonic, or even familial. But if you're reading this, chances are you're not asking about your cousin Becky or your childhood pet turtle. You're asking: Is this a real relationship? Does this count? What even defines a relationship is an ongoing emotional connection between people, where mutual affection, respect, and (ideally) trust exist. It can be romantic, but it doesn't have to be. The key word? Connection. [Read: Emotional Connection: 38 Signs, Secrets & Ways to Build a Real Bond] Psychologists often define relationships based on how people interact over time, this includes shared experiences, emotional intimacy, communication, and support. The stronger the bond. This one's shared experiences are shared experiences are shared experiences. The stronger the bond are shared experiences are shared experiences are shared experiences. obvious, but also the most complicated. A romantic relationship involves emotional intimacy, physical attraction, and (hopefully) mutual commitment. But in today's world, it's rarely that simple. Modern love languages include memes, Spotify playlists, and sending each other TikToks until 3 a.m. But underneath it all, romantic relationships require trust, effort, and mutual vulnerability. Somewhere between dating and ghosting lies the murky territory of situationships. These are undefined, casual, emotionally charged connections that often lack clarity. [Read: Situationship: Why People Like It, 51 Signs, Rules & Ways to Tell If It's For You] If you've ever asked, "So what are we?" and got a shrug you're likely in one. These are the ride-or-die bonds that don't involve romance but can be just as emotionally intense. Think sleepovers, shared trauma (like gym class), and late-night vent sessions. Snapchat besties. Discord crushes. TikTok comment flirtations. Welcome to Gen Z's favorite long-distance setups. These can feel very real, even if you've never met IRL. [Read: Long Distance Crush: The Best Ways to Deal with Your Far Away Feelings] Sometimes the most complicated of all. These connections shape how we attach, love, and even argue. Parents, siblings, guardians, they set the stage for how we experience closeness and conflict. Cheesy but true: this might be the most important one. Self-respect, self-talk, and your own emotional regulation play a huge role in how you relate to others. If you've ever felt like your crush ghosting your toe on a coffee table, you're not being dramatic, your brain literally registers social pain the same way it does physical pain. Thanks, evolution! Our brains are wired for connection. According to social neuroscience, areas like the anterior cingulate cortex (the pain center) light up when we feel rejected or excluded. Humans are biologically built for attachment, it's how we survived as a species. Psychologist Erik Erikson even dedicated an entire stage of development to this: "Intimacy vs. Isolation," which is all about forming close bonds in young adulthood. Translation? Feeling connected isn't optional, it's a psychological milestone. Source: Eisenberger, N.I. & Lieberman, M.D. (2004). Why it hurts to be left out: The neurocognitive overlap between physical and social pain Plus, relationships help us practice emotional regulation, communication, empathy, and even our sense of self. Romantic or not, every healthy connection is like a little mirror that helps us understand who we are. [Read: Sense of Self: What It Is, 36 Signs, Tips & Steps to Raise It and Feel Great] Not all relationships are created equal. Some feel like warm hugs in human form. Others? More like walking on eggshells with a side of anxiety. Here's how to know where your connection sits on the relationship spectrum: - You feel safe being your true self (yes, even your weird snack combos and ugly cry face) - Boundaries are respected, like if you need space, they don't take it personally - You talk with each other, not at each other - You can be apart without feeling insecure or anxious -There's mutual support: their wins feel like your wins, and vice versa [Read: How to Tell Someone You Don't Like Them: 13 Methods of Rejection] Psychologists call this secure attachment, a style where partners feel emotionally safe, consistent, and supportive. Source: Bowlby, J. (1988). A Secure Base: Clinical Applications of Attachment Theory. -Guilt-tripping, jealousy, or emotional manipulation is the norm - You walk on eggshells to avoid triggering drama - One person controls or pressures the other (like demanding phone passwords or 24/7 location sharing) - Gaslighting: they make you question your feelings or memory of events - Breakups and makeups feel like a toxic loop These dynamics are often signs of insecure attachment or learned patterns from early relationships. [Read: Insecure Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics, and Change. Let's be real: most relationships have their moments. One fight doesn't make it toxic, and one sweet gesture doesn't make it healthy. The key is to look at patterns, not isolated events. Ask yourself: Is this relationship helping me grow, or is it slowly chipping away at my self-worth? Welcome to the wild, weird, sometimes wonderful world of modern dating, where asking "Wanna hang out?" is somehow scarier than being chased by a bear, and ghosting is just a part of the landscape. This is where you text every day, maybe flirt a little, possibly even hold hands, but no one knows if you're actually dating. You talk, vibe, and maybe trauma-dump at 2 a.m., but neither of you wants to DTR (Define The Relationship). [Read: 37 Reasons, Signs & Must-Know Rules When a Guy Stops Texting You Often] It's like playing Sims with your emotions. Real effort, zero labels. Modern dating has its own horror movie villains: Ghosting: They disappear like your WiFi in a thunderstorm. One day you're FaceTiming, the next, radio silence. Breadcrumbing: They drop just enough flirty texts to keep you hooked, but never commit. Think Hansel & Gretel but emotionally confusing. Orbiting: They stop talking to you but still watch all your self-worth. It's not about you being "too much" or "not enough", sometimes people just lack emotional maturity or clarity. [Read: 20 Signs of Emotional Maturity & Traits that Reveal a Mature Mind] Tinder. Bumble. Hinge. It's like Pokémon but with more disappointment and fewer fireballs. After a while, all the bios blur together ("Dog lover, foodie, gym rat, 6'1 because apparently that matters"). Psychologically, this constant browsing can create what's known as the paradox of choice, gym rat, 6'1 because apparently that matters"). where having too many options actually makes us more anxious and less satisfied with any one choice. Source: Schwartz, B. (2004). The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less. You can't build a secure bond with someone who treats their feelings like Voldemort, "That which must not be named." [Read: Loving Someone You Can't Have: 15 Ways to Accept Unreciprocated Love] Being emotionally available means they can communicate their thoughts, acknowledge yours, and hold space for both of you, without disappearing into the void every time you ask, "What are we?" Let's say you've made it past the texting, swiping, and ghost-dodging, now what? A real relationship isn't just the cute Instagram posts or the good morning texts. It's the awkward convos, the shared silence, the compromise when one of you wants Thai food and the other's dreaming of tacos. [Read: 63 Cute Good Morning Texts that Work Like Magic to Make Them Smile] Here's how to keep it real, and healthy: Some people need words. Others need hugs. And some just want you to bring them fries without asking. Knowing how your partner gives and receives love can save a lot of miscommunication and hurt feelings. Source: Chapman, G. (1992). The Five Love Languages. "Where is this going?" "What are your boundaries?" "Are we exclusive?" These convos are like flossing, uncomfortable but necessary. Avoiding them might feel easier, but it builds resentment and confusion. Being in love doesn't mean becoming someone's emotional support peacock. Keep doing your priends, and pursuing your priends, and pursuing your priends and pursuing your priends are conclusion. Interdependence > codependence > codependence. [Read: 16 True Signs & Ways to Tell If Someone Doesn't Want to Be Your Friend] Disagreements are normal. What matters is how you fight. Do you scream-type in all caps? Do you take a break and come back when calmer? Healthy couples fight for the relationship, not to "win." That first month where everything's magical? Amazing. But real love is what happens after the butterflies. When the shine fades, consistency and respect should still stay. Ah, first love. It hits like a rom-com montage but feels more like a rollercoaster that forgot its brakes. When it's good, it's euphoric. When it ends, it's like your favorite comfort show got cancelled mid-season. But here's the good news: first love isn't just about the butterflies. It's about the blueprint it leaves behind. And trust me, you'll learn more from one heartbreak than a dozen self-help books. Crying over a playlist? Totally normal. Staring at your phone like it holds the secrets of the universe? We've all been there. First love pulls emotions to the surface like a Disney finale. Give yourself space to feel without judgment. Heartbreak is valid pain, not something to "get over" overnight. It's tempting out what you want, how you communicate, and where you're broken, but because you're figuring out what you want, how you communicate, and where you're broken, but because you're figuring out what you want, how you communicate, and where you're broken, but because you're broken, but because you're figuring out what you want, how you communicate, and where you're broken, but because you're broken, but be through the twenties. There's no one-size-fits-all breakup survival kit. Some people journal. Some block their ex on everything and start baking cookies at midnight. You do you. Just make sure you're moving forward, even if it's baby steps. [Read: Why Do People Break Up Even If They're Still in Love?] Yes, love hurt you once. But don't let that be your reason to avoid it forever. First love isn't supposed to be perfect, it's your intro class, not the final exam. Take the lessons, but don't close yourself off from future connection. 5. Know That This Isn't the End of the Story It feels like the whole world is collapsing, but heartbreak is the start of emotional resilience. Your next relationship will be stronger, wiser, and more aligned with who you are becoming. Great relationships don't just happen. They're built, like IKEA furniture, but hopefully with fewer leftover screws and way more emotional clarity. [Read: 15 Excuses & Nice Ways to Tell a Guy You're Not Interested & Don't Like Him] These are simple, science-backed skills that strengthen your relationship muscles before, during, or after love. Every day, ask yourself: "What am I feeling right now, and why?" Sounds cheesy, but this trains emotional awareness, which is crucial in relationships. If you can name your feelings, you're already ahead of most people who just say, "I'm fine" while internally panicking. Try saying "No" without overexplaining. Try, "I'm not comfortable with that." Try, "Let me think about it first." Healthy boundaries: When to Say No. [Read: How to Say No. 15 Ways to Reason Politely, Stop Pleasing & Feel Kickass] 3. Journal Your Relationship History Write about your past crushes, friendships, and fallouts. What patterns do you notice? What did each one teach you? This helps spot red flags before you're six months into another replay of your last emotional plot twist. Deep breathing. Walking a feel-good playlist. Venting to a friend instead of rage-texting. The more you can regulate your emotions, the less likely you are to blow up during tough moments, or say something you'll regret. Tell a friend you love them. Tell yourself, "I'm doing okay." Communicating affection builds secure bonds, and guess what? Vulnerability is magnetic. Source: Brown, B. (2012). Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. Even the best relationships hit roadblocks. And sometimes, the healthiest thing you can do is raise your hand and say, "Hey, I need a little help here." Asking for support isn't weakness, it's wisdom. You don't need to have it all figured out. Relationships are messy, emotional, and incredibly human. [Read: I Don't Need a Man: Convincing Reasons Why You Don't Need One!] If your relationship constantly leaves you anxious, exhausted, or scared, it's time to reach out. A trusted adult, school counselor, or therapist can help you sort through what's really going on. Break up, make up, repeat. If you've had the same fight for the 83rd time or keep ending up in the same kind of confusing situationships, a little outside perspective can make a huge difference. When you can't recognize who you are anymore, or you've put your needs on mute for too long, that's a signal. You deserve to be in a relationship that honors both of you. Maybe it's not you, but your best friend who's spiraling. You can support them, but you're not their therapist. Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult, hotline, or mental health pro. Here are a few resources: National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline: 1-866-331-9474 or text "LOVEIS" to 22522 Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 Local school counselor or teen health clinic So, what is a relationship? It's not a label, or a status, or how many hearts they put in their texts. It's how you feel when you're around someone. It's the trust, the safety, the inside jokes, and the growth you experience together. [Read: 29 Secrets to Get Someone to Text You First & the BIG Mistakes to Avoid!] Whether you're loving someone else or learning to love yourself, one thing's for sure, you're doing better than you think. And if you ever doubt it, this guide (and we) have got your back. So the next time someone asks, "What is a relationship really?" you'll know what to say, and maybe, just what you just read? Follow us on Instagram Facebook Twitter Pinterest and we promise, we'll be your lucky charm to a beautiful love life. And while you're at it, check out MIRL, a cool new social networking app that connects experts and seekers! A relationship is any connection between two or more people. Typically, people think of romantic relationships when they hear the word 'relationship'; indeed, this is what I help people with the most; for exampleRelationships are not just romantic. These types of relationships change as we grow and mature. Look at any four-year-old, and if you ask them about the person they are playing with, they will likely tell you that they are their friend, maybe even their best friend, even though they just met at the park. It's still a relationship you develop with friends as you age. These can start from a shared interest or proximity, such as being in the but grow as trust and respect deepens. Various relationships exist within a familyparent - which may also be a romantic relationships with the people we work with. Like all relationships, this can be good and bad. I often work with people referred to help them interact better with other team members. A romantic relationship is characterized by strong feelings of passion, but over time, those feelings tend to lessen in strength, and emotional intimacy and understanding grow. Also, relationships are often exclusive, meaning members are devoted to only one another romantically and sexually. And lastly, I want to talk about your relationships take time and commitment if they are to flourish, and if problematic, they can change if people can look at how they behave in relationships. People can look at how they behave in relationships take time and commitment if they are to flourish. enter counselling to help with communication in relationships, learn how to express more negative emotions without hurt and get their needs met. However, many of us, including myself, do not nurture our relationship with ourselves. It is just recently that I looked at my relationship with myself. I have always cared about people and enjoyed a caring role, hence my lifelong psychology career. But recently, I have seen how I poured myself into romantic relationships, often (well, always) at the expense of my needs. When I look back, I can see times when the idea of a relationship I was in, which led to many poor decisions in life. Living alone again in my fifties, I enjoy developing a relationship with myself. I have decades of experience caring for someone, but now I direct this toward myself. I am now doing anything that I would have done to care for a romantic partner for myself. Developing this relationship also focuses on prioritising my health. Currently, I am working on getting the best guality sleep I can.All of this self-care I am directing toward myself. When relationships are healthy, people flourish, but often the relationships in our life can become problematic, which is when I see people coming for therapy. Mental health can affect your relationship with yourself, such as having difficulty expressing emotions, or if you suffer from anxiety or depression or a type of OCD that negatively affects your relationship (ROCD). The kind of attachment style of OCD that negatively affects your relationship with others. Problems can arise from within yourself, such as having difficulty expressing emotions, or if you suffer from anxiety or depression or a type of OCD that negatively affects your relationship (ROCD). you have as an adult also has a direct impact on your ability to relate to others. Relationship problems can also be external factors of relationships in the following posts. Emotional abuseNarcissistic abuseGaslightingStonewallingRelationship anxietyRelationship OCD Most love relationships begin, develop, and even unravel without our being fully aware of what's going on. Especially at the beginning. That's why it's so valuable to understand the stages of a romantic relationship and how they impact your connection as a couple. We meet someone, feel an initial attraction, and then if everything lines up as it should, we are swept away in a torrent of chemically-driven emotions. As you've probably experienced, these intense feelings of infatuation and early love fall away over time and transform into something else. Sometimes that something else is a deeper, more satisfying, emotionally intimate connection. Other times, not so much. Understanding the relationship stages you and your partner experience can help you navigate these various phases with mindfulness and self-awareness. You might think about the stages of a relationship by month. We tend to assess a new romantic connection with how things progress from month to month. For example, here are some of the early stages of dating: Month 1 is defined by chemistry and attraction, as you are getting to know each other and experiencing infatuation. Month 2 the infatuation becomes more intense and begins to settle out, and you become an exclusive and experiencing infatuation. couple. But not all relationship trajectories follow a predictable monthly schedule. So much depends on how much time you spend with one another as well as the personalities and emotional needs of the two people involved. One of the best models for relationship phases is that of Mark Knapp, Professor Emeritus at the University of Texas at Austin. He is renowned for his research and writing on nonverbal communication in development between two people. His model shows us how relationships grow and develop and even how they deteriorate and ultimately end. You might have read about the 5 stages of a relationship, and there are 5 stages of love that couples experience. But Dr. Knapp suggests there are 10 stages of a new relationship begin when you first meet someone. This initiation stage is all about impressions and appearance. You are attracted to how this person looks, dresses, and presents themselves, and they are judging and evaluating you with these same criteria. You both are paying attention to the subtle and not-so-subtle signals you are sending about yourself and your attraction to one another. accurate, they influence whether or not the two of you want to progress to the next stage. In the early stages of a relationship, how to act can be confusing. As much as you want to put yourself physically attracted to this new person, pay attention to their body language, social skills, and any qualities you know you want in a partner. It's easy to overlook red flags when you have a strong attraction to someone. In this honeymoon stage of a relationship, both of you begin to dig a bit deeper to see what common interests and values you might have. You learn more about the person behind the attractive face and whether or not this is the type of person you want in your life. This can be disappointing when you realize this person isn't the right match or isn't what you thought he or she might be. In the talking stage of a relationship, it's important to ask important to get an idea about his new person away. You'll want to get an idea about his or her values related to what's important to you, as well as learn about areas of compatibility and commonalities in your world view. You don't want to ask off-putting questions like, "Do you see children in your future?" or "How much money do you make?" But you want to ask about their life goals, their family and friends, and how they spend free time. You can learn a lot about someone with just these questions. Now the relationship is getting more serious and intense. information. You are both checking the other to see if you share deeper feelings, and you're looking for signals that this person wants to move forward. This is the time when you might express your feelings of affection, start spending more time together and give one another gifts. It's one of the most important and exciting stages of romantic relationships. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of this new connection. But this is an important time to make sure you are both on the same page before you become more intimate or involved. Sometimes one partner is more ready to move forward in closeness and commitment before the other, which can result in the relationship ending prematurely or becoming imbalanced. If possible, try to pace yourself and use your good judgment even if you are completely infatuated. Now the relationship is in full bloom, and you are a couple. You spend increasing amounts of time together and begin integrating aspects of your life. vulnerable and open about various aspects of your life. This is the point when you are truly in love and feel free to express this with one another. Enjoy it! At this point in the relationship, you both feel secure and happy, and you are able to share more of your life. begin to see areas of possible disagreement or discord. Use the powerful connection and love you have in these early days to address any possible issues before they undermine your closeness. Now the two of you are fully integrated, and you develop a more formalized commitment through marriage or living together. Your friends and family view you as a committed couple. You may pool your financial resources, make joint decisions as a couple (rather than as individuals), and begin having children. Considering a long-term commitment to another person is a big step, and it means you have both navigated small and large hurdles in your developing relationship to reach this point. Having a bonded, loving, intimate romantic relationship is not only deeply satisfying but adds to your mission is to maintain your close connection and protect it from the inevitable challenges couples face in their lives together. Be sure you are both committed to putting your relationship first, and that you have a plan in place to nurture your relationship and manage conflict in healthy ways. More Related Articles: Why You Need A Personal Growth Plan And 9 Steps To Create One 27 Signs Of An Unhealthy Relationship Rela years go by, you may find yourselves in long-term relationship stages that aren't so positive. The two of you may see one another more as individuals than as a couple. This stagnant relationships. This stagnant relationships. The two of you may see one another more as individuals than as a couple. bubble of romance and infatuation has burst or is no longer impenetrable, and conflicts become more regular. It's very difficult to escape this stage, especially if you're a busy couple with children and career demands. Differing needs and pressures compel you to take out your stresses on one another and protect your turf. It's imperative for the health of your relationship that you take action to heal the rifts and address the triggers for conflict. This is a great time to find a licensed relationship counselor to help you get back on track and save your relationship. At this stage, you begin to pull apart even more. You set protective boundaries for yourself, and communication devolves and becomes less the triggers for conflict. and less intimate. You may have your own lives, separate friends and activities, and separate spaces in your home. Arguments push you further apart, and you may avoid arguments because they are so painful, even though the problem or issue stills exists between you. This is a very painful and lonely time in a relationship. The couple has pulled so far apart they have lost their original intimate connection and respect for one another. If you want to save your relationship, it is essential you work together with a counselor to heal the damage and define a new way of relating and reconnecting. You both will need to move past defensiveness, blaming, and resentments in order to build a stronger connection. If one of you is unwilling, there isn't much hope for saving the relationship has stagnated, you've reached the point where separation is virtually complete. However, the relationship persists for reasons of convenience or necessity. You may feel apathetic and disengaged, but at this point, you don't see a compelling reason to end the relationship. At this stage, couples may stay together because they have children, even though their relationship has tanked. If tension and conflict continue, it's hard to discern whether separation is best or worst for the children. It's time to get counseling for yourself. You need help in navigating this very painful time and deciding the best course of action. You may have financial issues to figure out, as well as coping with the emotional pain of ending this bond. Even if the relationship has hit rock bottom, the two of you are still intertwined in many ways. Whether you're living under the same roof or one of you has moved out, now you are still intertwined in many ways. time together, and when you are together, there is little eye contact or real communication. You are taking the first steps toward a permanent end to the relationship has ended in all but the most formal ways. At this point, avoidance is a necessary coping mechanism and facilitates the end of the bond between you. You may find yourself confused and conflicted, and you may attempt to reconnect to avoid the pain of the separation. Again, having the support of a counselor, as well as a support system of family and friends, can help you have clarity and strength during this time. The relationship permanently ends through a divorce or the two people moving to separate homes. This can be a difficult time if there is conflict over money, children, and housing arrangements. For some couples, it is a time of relief and thinking ahead to a new future. You will likely need the help of an attorney and/or mediator to deal with the practical aspects of dividing assets and co-parenting your children. If you do have children, you will have several years in which you must navigate parenting decisions, child support, and custody. Having these decisions formalized through the court system will help you cope with potential conflict between you and your former partner. You may begin thinking about a new relationship at this point. Or you may still feel too much pain and confusion to consider entering a new relationship. Both of these feelings are normal. Use this time to examine what you learned through your previous relationship, and how you can apply those lessons as you move on in your life. Tips for Maintaining Closeness Over Time Maintaining closeness in a relationship is crucial to its longevity. After all, love is a verb, and it takes effort to nurture and grow a healthy, vibrant connection. Here are some tips for keeping that close bond in your relationship: Communicate Effectively: This involves actively listening to your partner and expressing your thoughts and feelings clearly and respectfully while being open to feedback. It's also important to communicate regularly, not just when problems arise. Regular check-ins and conversations about your hopes, fears, and goals also go a long way. Prioritize Quality Time: Life gets busy, but it's important to prioritize quality time with your partner. Set aside time to do things you both enjoy, whether it's watching a movie or going for a walk. Show Affection: Never underestimate the power of physical touch. Hold hands, cuddle, or give your partner a kiss. These small gestures can help maintain intimacy. Keep the Spark Alive: It's easy to get comfortable in a long-term relationship, so it's essential to keep the romance alive. Plan date nights, surprise each other with small gestures, and make time for physical intimacy. Express Appreciate them and what they do for you. Say thank you, compliment them, and acknowledge their efforts. Knowing that you know about the different stages of a relationship, you can better understand where you and your partner are as a couple. Hopefully, you are in the first five stages of love, and your connection with your love interest is going strong. In these initial stages, it's important to: Pace yourself and give the relationship time to grow. Be yourself rather than trying to impress. Learn as much as you can about one another before you become intimate. Pace yourself and give the relationship time to grow. Be yourself rather than trying to impress. Learn as much as you can about one another before you become intimate. Page states: Take action as soon as possible to repair any rifts between you. Reconnect through dates, fun, and intimacy. Seek professional help with a counselor as soon as you sense a problem. Understanding these relationship at a counselor as soon as you sense a problem. are now with your partner or love interest, and use this information to thoughtfully consider your next steps. Develop trust, emotional intimacy, and good communication skills. Be honest and open with your partner, ask lots of questions, and listen. Make time for dates and other fun activities. Spend quality time together, indulge in spontaneity, and use plenty of physical affection. Fight fairly and resolve conflicts respectfully to move forward together. Establish needs and boundaries with your partner is about making them feel loved and ensuring they do the same for you. Verbalize your deepest emotions to your partner and tell them that you love them. The more understood and emotionally fulfilled you'll both feel.[2] A healthy relationship is one where both partners communicate, share their feelings, and respect one another without power imbalance. However, your partner should never pressure you to be vulnerable when you're not ready, or push you to share every little thought. Gratitude is also important. Make a daily habit of showing appreciation for your partner? Compliment their strengths and thank them when they do something for you. Advertisement Enjoy dates and activities as a couple to feel connected with your partner. Even if you've been together for a long time, planning activities with your partner is essential. Set aside 1 night each week to be your designated "date night," and think of fun things to do that you'll both enjoy. It's okay to spend some nights lounging at home, but also be sure to do things that take you out on the town![3] Date nights can be anything you find fun (and romantic). For example, you could do karaoke, go bowling, revisit a favorite restaurant, or take a hike together. Life gets busy sometimes, especially if work or kids are involved. If weekly date nights aren't feasible for the moment, plan monthly dates instead. Try doing chores and household tasks together, too. This shouldn't replace dates or leisure activities, but it's a good way to spend quality time with your partner aware of what you need in a relationship. Explain each boundary or partner while ensuring that you share responsibilities. expectation to your partner, and get verbal confirmation that they understand and will respect each one. Defining such limits will prevent conflict, and you'll have a basis for discussion if someone crosses the line.[4] Boundaries could be personal, social, financial, or sexual. For example, you might explain to your partner that you value quality time with them, but you need at least 1 night a week to spend with friends. In a healthy relationship, neither partner should try to control the other. Respect your standards for a relationship! Know what you want in the relationship, and don't settle for someone sub-partner should try to control the other. You deserve a partner who will respect you and your needs. Advertisement Relationships are more fulfilling when you prioritize each other's needs. You must understand your partner's expectations and boundaries, just as they should respect yours. Learn about their needs for the relationship early on, whether they come out and tell you or you need to ask them. Respecting your partner's boundaries signals that you trust them to act independently without betraying you.[5] Common boundaries include understanding your partner's expectations and limits on intimacy, public displays of affection, and confidentiality. Your partner's boundaries include understanding you.[5] Common boundaries include understanding yo your partner, communicate honestly about what bothers you and what you enjoy. Be specific about your emotional wants and needs. Communicate your needs at the beginning of your relationship. You're expressing vulnerability and trust in your partner by opening yourself up—and your openness also invites them to be just as honest with you.[6] There's a difference between honesty and criticism. Avoid criticizing your partner—both to their face and to others. Phrase your words constructively and be respectful at all times. If something is bothering you, express it gently but assertively. For example, you could say, "I love you very much, but sometimes, I feel frustrated when I come home to a dirty house. Can we come up with a solution?" Ask your partner open-ended questions to allow them to express themselves freely too. You'll facilitate meaningful communication is a two-way road! When your partner speaks, give them your full attention; actively listen and remember what they say. Focus on understanding their words rather than formulating your response. Keep steady eye contact, and avoid interrupting them as they speak.[7] Affirm that you're listening by making a small, reassuring noise like "Mhmm" or saying, "Go on." Show your partner that you understand them by mirroring their words back to them. For example, if they tell you about a conflict at work, you could say, "It sounds like work is really frustrating for you right now." Read your partner's body language to figure out how they're feeling. Focus on making them feel better if they seem grumpy or tired! Trust is the key to a long, healthy, and happy relationship. Talk to your partner about trust and what it means to you. What do you consider a violation of trust? Does your version of trust? Does your partner in times of need, and respect their boundaries at all times.[8] For example, some see physical cheating is as bad as physical cheating. Clarify your outlook with your partner early on. Openness and honesty are also vital for building trust—which is another reason your outlook with your partner early on. and your partner should practice them with one another. Reader Poll: We asked 1673 wikiHow readers, and 62% of them agreed that the most important aspect of a committed relationship is building trust and loyalty between partners. [Take Poll] Advertisement Spontaneity keeps your romance feeling fresh and new. Relationships can become routine quickly, so keep the spark going by thinking of fun and creative ways to surprise your partner. Spring a small gift or romantic activity on them, or bring them on a spur-of-the-moment overnight getaway. Do something neither of you has ever tried to keep both of you engaged and entertained.[9] For example, if you've both talked about how fur it'd be to learn archery, sign you and your partner up for lessons! If you've been talking about your next vacation, suggest a place neither of you has been before. Not every surprise has to be a grand, expensive gesture. It could be as simple as cooking your partner's favorite meal, buying their favorite treat after work, or offering them a romantic massage. See how other wikiHow readers are keeping their relationships exciting on our "How can you be more fun and adventurous in your relationship?" forum page! A healthy romantic connection requires touch and physical affection. Make a point to initiate physical contact and build intimacy in the relationship. This could be cuddling on the couch, holding hands while out in public, hugging them more often, or giving them more kisses when the urge strikes! Talk to your partner about your desires.[10] When discussing sex, discuss your preferences, expectations, desires, and limits. Once you and your partner understand each other's needs, it's easier to have a satisfying sex life. Healthy relationships are all about feeling close to your partner, both emotionally and physically. If you feel like there's distance between you, there's distance between you, there's distance between you, there's distance between you have a satisfying sex life. you fight, ensure you fight fairly: focus on the problem at hand and avoid blaming or name-calling. Use "I" statements to tell your partner how you feel without making them feel attacked, and work together to compromise and resolve the conflict in a way you both agree with.[11] Ask your partner open-ended questions to get their perspective on the "What would be an ideal solution for you?" or "How do you think this would be best handled?" An "I" statement would be, "I feel upset when you're always late!" Maintain a calm demeanor during the argument. Take deep breaths, slow down your speech so you have time to think, and don' issue. Sav. be afraid to ask for a temporary break so you can cool off. Burying conflicts is never healthy; you might avoid an argument, but the source of your troubles goes unresolved. Work with your partner to address conflict rather than letting it lie. Esther Perel, Psychotherapist Relationship issues get resolved when both parties are willing to communicate and dig deep. "Issues and conflict will arise in every relationships, the deeper issue is recognized, and we work to chip away at it, moving from rupture to repair." Apologies and heartfelt forgiveness foster more trust between you. Recognized, and we work to chip away at it, moving from rupture to repair." your mistake and how it made your partner feel while explaining how you plan to fix things. If both of you have done something hurtful, taking the first step also makes it easier for your partner to follow suit and apologize, too.[12] It's important to forgive your. negative feelings and then release them as you forgive your partner. Let go of grudges; holding onto them only worsens a problem. If your partner did something months ago, forgive them for it and move on. Don't use what they did in the past against them. Learn to appreciate your differences. Those differences make the relationship dynamic and interesting; you don't need to agree on everything, so long as you understand one another. Advertisement Mutual growth and change is a surefire sign of a healthy relationship with your partner, and don't let your fears hold you back. Embrace change and focus on growing with your partner during your relationship's ups and downs. Remember that ups and downs in a relationship are only natural. Don't blame your partner for your problems; work together as a team to overcome them. Don't be afraid to get help together if changes in your relationsnip are too overwneiming to handle alone. You could consult a trusted confidance or a couples' therapist. Keeping up with other relationship doesn't mean you're permanently glued to your partner! Balance your time spent together with time spent apart; go out with your friends, spen time with family, and engage with your personal hobbies. Encourage your partner to do the same for themselves. When you value yourself, you're more likely to stick to your standards and expectations and look for a partner who is everything you deserve! Learn to love yourself by repeating positive affirmations, acknowledging and appreciating your strengths, and doing things that make you feel good.[13] [14] If you struggle with appreciating your strengths, and doing things that make you feel good.[13] [14] If your friends described you, what would they say is your best guality? EXPERT TIP John Keegan Dating Coach John Keegan is a Dating Coach and motivational speaker based in New York City. With over 10 years of professional experience, he runs The Awakened Lifestyle, where he uses his expertise in dating, attraction, and social dynamics to help people find love. He teaches and holds dating workshops internationally, from Los Angeles to London and from Rio de Janeiro to Prague. His work has been featured in the New York, and Men's Health. Confidence makes you more desirable. To set yourself up for a healthier partnership, focus on building a positive self-image and be kind to yourself. Ask a Question Advertisement This article was co-authored by Sarah Schewitz, Psy.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist by the California Board of Psychology with over 10 years of experience. She received her Psy.D. from the Florida Institute of Technology in 2011. She is the founder of Couples Learn, an online psychology practice helping couples and individuals improve and change their patterns in love and relationships. This article has been viewed 333,147 times. Co-authors: 20 Updated: May 20, 2025 Views: 333,147 times. Co-authors: 20 Updated: May 20, 2025 Views: 333,147 times. relationship healthy, but if you focus on being open and honest with your partner, you'll feel your relationship, so talk to your partner about things that bother you. For example, if your partner doesn't clean the house enough, say something like "I love you, but I feel frustrated when I come home to a dirty house. Can we come up with a solution?" If you have an argument, avoid blaming each other or name-calling, since these are more hurtful than helpful. Instead, cooperate to find a solution you can both agree on. Additionally, make sure to set boundaries and expectations you have for each other so you're on the same page. For instance, some couples like to split finances 50/50, while others pay for things individually. Knowing how your partner feels about these things will avoid conflict later on! To learn how to keep the romance alive in your relationship, read more from our Dating co-authors? page that has been read 333,147 times. "My partner loves me but he does not want to say those words. It seems difficult for him to say "I love you" to me. I can see his actions and efforts. But as a woman I need to hear those words. It seems difficult for him to say "I love you" to me. I can see his actions and efforts. But as a woman I need to hear those words. It seems difficult for him to say "I love you" to me. 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I want to to told that I'm loved."..." more seems difficult for him to say "I love you" to me. I can see his actions and efforts. But as a woman I need to hear those words. I want to to told that I'm loved."..." more seems difficult for him to say "I love you" to me. I can see his actions and efforts. But as a woman I need to hear those words. I want to to told that I'm loved."..." more seems difficult for him to say "I love you" to me. I can see his actions and efforts. But as a woman I need to hear those words. I woman I need to and we do not control its accessibility features. By Vishnu Subramaniammbg Contributor Vishnu Subramaniam is a writer, coach, and author of nine self published books, including The Sacred Art of Letting Go. Expert review by Kristina Hallett, Ph.D., ABPP is a board-certified clinical psychologist with a background in neuroscience. She is also the Director of Clinical Training at Bay Path University, and an associate professor in Graduate Psychology. A healthy, it requires more than just shared interests and strong feelings for each other. It requires two people who truly understand and care for each other, while also caring for themselves. Here are the most important characteristics of a healthy relationship. Once the chase is over, some people can forget about tending to their partner's feelings and needs. In lasting, healthy relationships, partners value each other and take care with their words, actions, and behaviors. If you want to be with that person each day, make them feel that way. Likewise, you should receive this care from your partner day in and day out.2.You're vulnerable with each otherGood communication is a necessary quality of a healthy relationship. If you're not willing to share what's going on with you or what you need. Yet people—out of shame or a habit built over a lifetime of bottling up our feelings—don't want to let anyone else in on what's going on with us. If you can trust your partner enough to share your feelings, you're more likely to find yourself in a safe relationships a safe relationships require trust. You have to be willing to trust your partner not only with your feelings but with your weaknesses. You will have to learn trust at the emotional, physical, and spiritual level. Trust takes practice and is earned one step at a time. Even when trust if you're willing to share what's going on, no matter how ugly. You can't hide behind lies and deception if your relationship to last. If you can't believe your partner is hiding things from you, it's going to be hard for you to feel safe. Honesty helps foster trust and a belief in each other, which is crucial to making it over the long haul. (Here's what open and honest communication in a relationship looks like.) Another key quality of a healthy relationship is empathy. Empathy means trying to fix your partner is feeling. It isn't about trying to fix your partner is feeling. It isn't about trying to fix your partner is feeling. attention to what's going on with your partner and strive to see things for your best friend. Try to anticipate their needs. Think about what they need help with and try to be there for them. Cut out the behavior that gets on their nerves, and find ways to uplift your partner. Thoughtfulness, consideration, and kindness is the recipe for healthy relationships.7. You respect each other's boundaries that you may not share. You will not agree on everything, and sometimes you may not want the same things. It's important to respect these differences and not push each other's boundaries, and any other types of boundaries, and any other types of boundaries. Boundaries are a necessary characteristic of a healthy relationship.8.You're both totally committedYou have to be committed to your partner, yes. But more than commitment to your partner, you have to be committed to the relationship. If you think about the health and future of the relationship instead of just your own, you're likely to take more constructive actions and behave differently. It's not just about getting your needs met. It's about replenishing the fire so your relationship can last. That's what a healthy relationship is all about. Thoughtfulness is a characteristic of a healthy relationship that often gets overlooked because it can be hard to articulate. Essentially, thoughtfulness means keeping your partner in mind and striving to do things that will make their lives better. It's knowing their preferences, opinions, and guirks so you're able to dance with them, not fight them with. The better you know your partner, the more you can practice thoughtfulness. What can you do today to help them or improve their lives? What can you do today to help them or improve their lives? qualities, characteristics, and behaviors that push your buttons. To make your relationship last, you have to accept your partner unconditionally-quirks, behavior, flaws, and all.Likewise, you will sometimes feel hurt throughout a relationship because we're all humans who make mistakes. The key is to forgive quickly, let go of grudges, and start over each day. Yes, this is easier said than done, but forgiveness is crucial to the long-term health of the relationship. You have to let go of trespasses and also be willing to ask for forgiveness takes courage, vulnerability, and practice. Of course, forgiveness takes courage, vulnerability, and vulnerabil are many signs of an abusive relationship that aren't physical to be aware of. In a healthy relationship, you first you make the commitment to accept them completely. Then, you speak up and say what it is that's bothering you. If hurtful actions continue, it may be a sign you should break up.RELATED: Unconditional Love: How To Give It & Know If It's Healthy11.You're gentle with each otherGentleness comes through in thoughts, words, actions, and your general state of being. It's understanding and accepting your partner in a respectful, kind, and compassionate way. It's recognizing your soulful connection and appreciating their inherent humanness.12. There's a lot of affection is a key quality of a healthy relationships, we often forget to show love and affection humanness. great. Affection can be as simple as touching, holding, or kissing your partner for no reason at all. It's a warm embrace, a light touch, a loving word, or any other small way you can show your partner that you love them. To be most affectionate, you have to know how your partner receives love best and do more of that. Is it a loving word, a thoughtful gesture, help around the house, or doing something special for them? The better you know what your partner enjoys, the more affectively show your love to each other.13. You consistently appreciate each otherGratitude is another key quality of a healthy relationship. We all take our partners for granted sometimes. If you can regularly remind yourself how lucky you are and how valuable your partner is, and tell them so, you will boost the happiness and longevity of your relationship. Partners who stay together appreciate each other and compliment each other. Recognize what your partner is doing, and let them know that you're thankful for it.14. You both feel validated by the otherMost of the time, people don't really understand us. Everyone has different opinions, and needing to always be right can negatively affect your relationship. Validating your partner shows them that you're on their side. When you understand and accept what they say, they feel fully seen, heard, and accepted. It's acknowledging what your partner is saying to you and showing them that you get them—you understand what they're saying and experiencing. When you accept, you accept, you show unconditional love, which is ultimately what keeps people and relationships together in the long run. This ad is displayed using third party content and we do not control its accessibility features. Skip to content Reviewed by Psychology Today Staff Love is one of the most profound emotions known to human beings. There are many kinds of love, but many people seek its expression in a romantic relationship with a compatible partner (or partners). For these individuals, romantic relationships comprise one of the most meaningful aspects of life, and are a source of deep fulfillment. While need for human connection appears to be innate, the ability to form healthy, loving relationships is learned. Some evidence suggests that the ability to form a stable relationship starts to form in infancy, in a child's earliest experiences with a caregiver who reliably meets the infant's needs for food, care, warmth, protection, stimulation, and social contact. Such relationships are not destiny, but they are theorized to establish deeply ingrained patterns of relationships are not destiny. great psychological anguish. To learn more, see Personality and Relationships. Each individual should, for starters, feel confident that their partner is willing to devote time and attention to the other. They must both also be committed to accommodating their differences, even as those change over time. In the 21st century, good relationships are generally marked by emotional and physical fairness, particularly in the distribution of chores necessary to maintain a household. Partners in strong relationships also feel grateful for one another, openly provide and receive affection, and engage in honest discussions about sex. In good relationships, partners try to afford their partners t To learn more, see Maintaining a Relationship and Love and Sex. article continues after advertisement Finding a partner with whom to share a life is a wonderful but frequently difficult process. Whether it's conducted online or in-person, the search will likely push an individual into unfamiliar settings to encounter potential partners. To be successful, it is often necessary to go outside of one's comfort zone. Determining whether a particular person is suitable as a potential match is one's control is suitable as a potential match is one's sense of self. Someone who would make a good partner may push an individual to discover new activities or beliefs that expand their own self-concept. Another early signifier may be stress: Repeatedly interacting with someone whose impression matters deeply to us can fuel anxiety. Other positive indicators include being highly motivated to see the person and investing a significant amount of time, emotion, and energy into the budding relationship. To learn more, see How People Find Love. Every relationship represents a leap of faith for at least one partner, and even in the happiest couples, the very traits that once attracted them to each other can eventually become annovances that drive them apart. Acquiring the skills to make a connection last is hard work, and threats may spring up without notice. In short-term, casual relationships, neither partner may see a truly viable long-term future together, but often only one takes action, in some cases ghosting the other, walking out of their lives with no communication, not even a text. For some couples, infidelity is both the first and last straw, but a surprising number of relationships survive betrayal, some only to have their connection upended by everyday threats such as a loss of interest in physical intimacy, or a waning of positive feeling in the wake of constant criticism, contempt, or defensiveness. Even staying together for decades is no guarantee that a couple will remain connected: The divorce rate for couples over 50 has doubled since 1990. Some people can walk away from years of marriage and instantly feel unburdened. For others, the end of a relationship that lasted just a few dates can trigger emotional trauma that lingers for years. However a breakup plays out, it can be a major stressor with an effect on ego and self-esteem that cannot be ignored. To learn more, see Relationships. Next: How People Find Love You know the song that goes, "I wish I knew you when I was young, we could've got so high?" Well, don't feel too low about missed opportunities. Instead, realize how timing works. Caregiving is already challenging, and deportations can add to the stress. Talking about these issues, planning ahead, and leaning on cultural influences affect perceptions of safety and consent around sexual choking? This dangerous practice is attracting fresh legal attention. Regularly communicating four phrases may signify that you have the emotionally intelligent qualities: self-awareness, empathy, and motivation. In spite of our clear efforts to connect with each other, the path we are currently walking may result in a future of intimacy primarily with artificial intelligence.

Suppressing emotions doesn't make them disappear—in fact, they're likely to leak out through your body language, tone, and more. Here's how to spot "emotional leakage." Find a Relationship Issues Therapist Get the help you need from a therapist near you-a FREE service from Psychology Today. Atlanta, GA Austin, TX Baltimore, MD Boston, MA Brooklyn, NY Charlotte, NC Chicago, IL Columbus, OH Dallas, TX Denver, CO Detroit, MI Houston, TX Indianapolis, IN Jacksonville, FL Las Vegas, NV Los Angeles, CA Louisville, FL Las Vegas, NV Los Angeles, CA Louisville, FL Las Vegas, NV Los Angeles, CA Louisville, TN New York, NY Oakland, CA Omaha, NE Philadelphia, PA Portland, OR Raleigh, NC Sacramento, CA Saint Louis, MO San Antonio, TX San Diego, CA San Francisco, CA San Francisco, CA San Jose, CA Seattle, WA Tucson, AZ Washington, DC You'll have many different types of relationships throughout your life. Most tend to be categorized as acquaintances, friends, family, romantic partners, sexual partners, work colleagues, or situational relationships. Each type comes with different expectations, benefits, and challenges. Interpersonal relationships are a vital part of life. They can range from close and intimate to distant and challenging. No matter the nature of the relationships are a vital part of life. well-being. We make all kinds of connections with other people over the course of our lives. Some of these are positive relationships that help us feel a sense of belonging. Others can be less helpful, or may even have negative effects on our mental health and well-being. To better understand and discuss these relationships accurately, it can be helpful to learn more about the different types of relationships a person can have. A relationship is any connection between two people, including family and friends. The phrase "being in a relationship," while often linked with romantic relationships, can refer to various associations one person has with another. To "be in a relationships that have unique characteristics. can sometimes overlap): Family relationships Friendships Sexual relationships (sometimes called "situationships") These different subtypes of relationships within each of these basic types. Some of the different kinds of relationships, the four main types are typically identified as family relationships, friendships, friendships, and acquaintanceships. A platonic relationship is a type of friendship that involves a close, intimate bond without sex or romance. These relationships tend to be characterized by: ClosenessFondnessUnderstandingRespectCareSupportHonessy Acceptance Platonic relationships can occur in a wide range of settings and can involve same-sex or opposite-sex friendships. You might form a platonic relationship with a classmate or co-worker, or you might make a connection with a person in another setting such as a club, athletic activity, or volunteer organization you are involved in. This type of relationship can play an essential role in providing social support, which is essential for your health and well-being. Research suggests that platonic friendships can help reduce your risk for disease, lower your risk for depression or anxiety, and boost your immunity. Platonic relationships involve closeness and friends-to-lovers situation. Romantic relationships are those characterized by feelings of love and attraction for another person. While romantic love can vary, it often involves feelings of infatuation, intimacy, and commitment. Experts have come up with a variety of different ways to describe how people experience and express love. For example, psychologist Robert Sternberg suggests three main components of love: passion, intimacy, and decision/commitment. Romantic love, he explains, is a combination of passion and intimacy. Romantic relationship when people are first falling in love, people typically experience stronger feelings of passion. During this initial infatuation period, the brain releases specific neurotransmitters (dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin) that cause people to feel euphoric and "in love." Over time, these feelings start to lessen in their intensity. People develop deeper levels of the neurotransmitters (dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin) that cause people to feel euphoric and "in love." Over time, these feelings start to lessen in their intensity. the beginning. That's why we often feel like we can't stop thinking about the object of our affection and want to be near them all the time. While the initial feelings of trust, emotional intimacy, and commitment grow stronger. A codependent relationship is an imbalanced, dysfunctional type of relationship in which a partner has an emotional, physical, or mental reliance on the other person. It is also common for both partners to be mutually co-dependent on each other. Both may take turns enacting the caretaker role, alternating between the caretaker role, alternating between the caretaker and the receiver of care. a giver while the other person acts as a takerGoing to great lengths to avoid conflict with the other person from their own actionsDoing things to make someone happy, even if they make you uncomfortableFeeling like you don't know who you are in the relationshipElevating the other person even if they've done nothing to earn your goodwill and admiration Not all codependency can impact all different types of relationships including relationships between romantic partners, parents and children, friendship, other family members, and even coworkers. Codependent relationships are co-constructed. While one partner might feel more comfortable being needed, for instance, may avoid focusing on their own needs by choosing a partner who constantly needs them Casual relationships often involve dating relationships that may include sex without expectations of monogamy or commitment. However, experts suggest that the term is vague and can mean different things to different people. According to the authors of one study published in the Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, casual relationships can encompass situations such as: One-night stands Booty calls "Sex" buddies Friends with benefits Such relationship, and degree of friendship. The study found that people with more sexual experiences of friendship. were better able to identify the definitions of these labels compared to people with less sexual experience. Casual relationships are often common among young adults. As long as casual relationships are marked by communication, and companionship without the emotional demands and energy commitment of a more serious relationship. Casual relationship is a type of consensually non-monogamous relationship in which one or more partners have sex or relationships with other people. Both people agree to have sex with other people in an open relationship, whether casual, dating, or married. There tends to be a stigma surrounding nonmonogamous relationships. Still, research suggests that around 21% to 22% of adults will be involved in some type of open relationship also depends on gender and sexual orientation. Men reported having higher numbers of open relationships compared to women; people who identify as gay, lesbian, and bisexual were more likely to report previous engagement in open relationships compared to those who identify as heterosexual. Such as jealousy and emotional pain. Open relationships are more successful when couples establish personal, emotional, and sexual boundaries and clearly communicate their feelings and needs. Open relationships are a form of consensual non-monogamy. While there is a primary emotional and often physical connection between the two people in the relationship. A toxic relationship is any type of interpersonal relationship where your emotional, physical, or psychological well-being is undermined or threatened in some way. Such relationships often leave you feeling ashamed, humiliated, misunderstood, or unsupported. Any type of relationship can be toxic, including friendships, family relationships, romantic relationships, or workplace relationships. Sometimes all people in a relationship play a role in creating this toxicity. For example, you may be contributing to toxicity if you are all consistently unkind, critical, insecure, and negative. In other cases, one person in a relationship may behave in ways that create toxic feelings. This may be intentional, but in other cases, people may not fully understand how they are affecting other people. Because of their past experiences with relationships, often in their home growing up, they may not know any other way of acting and communicating. This doesn't just create discontentment—toxic relationships can take a serious toll on your health. For example, according to one study, stress caused by negative relationships has a direct impact on cardiovascular health. Feeling isolated and misunderstood in a relationships can be stressful, harmful, and even abusive. If you are in a toxic relationship with someone in your life, work on creating strong boundaries to protect yourself. Talk to a mental health professional or consider terminating the relationship if it is causing you harm. How you define your relationship if it is causing you harm. relationship, it can be helpful to ask a few questions: Do you have romantic feelings for one another? What does each person hope to get out of the relationship going? Are you currently involved with other people? Figuring out what matters to you and your partner is an important step in defining the type of relationships you are interested in having. You might find that you are both on the same page or discover that you want different things out of your relationship. Defining your relationship doesn't have to mean committing for the long term. Instead, it can be a way to help you both better understand the boundaries and expectations of your relationship. Regardless of how you define your relationships are also marked by honesty, trust, and reciprocity. This doesn't mean that the relationship is purely transactional; it indicates that you naturally engage in a give-and-take that provides mutually beneficial support. No matter what type of relationship s are characterized by trust, mutual respect, openness, honesty, and affection. Good communication is also a key factor. You can take steps to improve your relationships with other people. Two helpful strategies are to let others know you care and show you care and sho boundaries, talk to a therapist, or even consider ending the relationships if it is taking too much of a toll on your well-being. Social relationships with different people can ensure that you have the support and connections you need, minimize your risk of loneliness and social isolation, and improve your emotional health and well-being. SignsRed flagsQuizTipsTakeawayOpen communication, curiosity, individual interests, and teamwork are just a few ways to develop a healthy relationship. It also depends on your needs and those of your partner. Healthy relationships don't look the same for everyone. We all have different needs. Your specific needs around important aspects of a relationship may change throughout life. What makes a relationship that don't align with more traditional relationships can still be healthy. For example, people who practice polyamory or ethical non-monogamy might define a healthy relationship somewhat differently than people who practice monogamy. "One thing healthy relationships largely share is adaptability," Lindsey Antin, a therapist in Berkeley, California, told Healthline. "They adapt to circumstances and the fact we're always changing and going through different phases in life."Here's a look at some other hallmarks of healthy relationships. Partners in healthy relationships are often comfortable facing different opinion, they listen without judgment and then share their perspective. Communication goes both ways It's important you also feel that they'll voice their own concerns or thoughts as they come up. People in non-monogamous relationships may place even more value on emotional check-ins and frequent communication about what's happening with other partners. Trust involves honesty and integrity. You don't keep secrets from each other. When you're apart, you don't worry about them pursuing other people. But trust goes beyond believing they won't cheat or lie to you. It also means you feel safe and comfortable with them and know they have your own choices. Healthy relationships are best described as interdependent. Interdependent. Interdependence means you rely on each other for mutual support but still maintain your identity as a unique individual. In other words, your relationship is balanced. You know you have their approval and love, but your self-esteem doesn't depend on them. Although you're there for each other, you don't depend on each other to get all of your needs met. You still have friends and connections outside the relationship means you're interested in their thoughts, goals, and daily life. You want to watch them grow into their best self. You're not fixated on who they used to be or who you think they should be. Curiosity also means you're willing to consider or talk about changes to your relationship become less fulfilling. Recognizing the need for personal space and time to separate from your partner is essential in a healthy relationship. This time may be spent relaxing solo, pursuing a hobby, or spending time with friends and family. Although spending time together is important, setting aside time to be without your partner may also be just as advantageous. When the mood is right, it's important to make time for fun and spontaneity. If you can joke and laugh together, that's a good sign. Sometimes, life challenges or distress might affect one or both of you. This can temporarily change the tone of your relationship and make it hard to relate to each other in your usual ways. But being able to share lighter moments that help relieve tension, even briefly, strengthens your relationship even in tough times. Intimacy often refers to sex, but not always. As long as you're both on the same page about getting your needs met, your relationship can still be healthy without it. Physical intimacy you share, physically connecting and bonding is important. Your physical relationship is most likely healthy without it. Physical relationship can still be healthy without it. Physical relationship can still be healthy without it. Physical relationship is most likely healthy without it. Physical relationship is most likely healthy without it. Physical relationship is most likely healthy without it. Physical relationship can still be healthy without it. Physical relationship is most likely healthy without it. Physical when you:feel comfortable initiating and talking about sexcan positively handle rejection about sex or specific sex acts when they say nosharing information about other partnersdiscussing sexual risk factorsA strong relationship, you'll have occasional disagreements and feel frustrated or angry with each other from time to time. However, partners who address conflict without judgment or contempt can often find a compromise or solution. If you can talk about your differences politely, honestly, and with respect, you're on the right track. Your relationship should contribute to a sense of fulfillment, happiness, and connection. If you tend to feel more anxious, distressed, or unhappy around your partner, your relationships can vary widely. Below are a few signs to consider."We are never in control of changing another person," Antin said. If you're concerned about a specific behavior, you should feel comfortable enough to bring it up. It's OK to express your feelings and ask them to consider making changes. But it's not OK to tell them what to do or attempt to control their behavior. If they do something that really bothers you and you can't accept it, the relationship may not have long-term potential. Boundaries can come into play across your relationship, from respectful communication to privacy needs. Maybe you've said, "I need personal space when I get home from work. I'm happy to see you, but I need to de-stress before any physical affection." But they continue to come up to you right when you get home, trying to kiss you and pull you into the bedroom. When you say no, they apologize and say, "I just can't help myself." If you set a boundary and they push against it or pressure you to change it, that can be a serious red flag. Your relationship might be struggling if you consistently see less of each other without a clear reason, such as family difficulties or more responsibilities at work. Other warning signs include feeling distant from each other or relieved when you're not together. You might even try to find excuses to avoid spending time together. Healthy relationships tend to be fairly well balanced. Beyond financial responsibilities, relationship expectations. Periods of inequality can happen from time to time. One of you might temporarily lose your income, have difficulty helping with chores because of illness, or feel less affectionate due to stress or other emotional turmoil. But if your relationship regularly feels unbalanced and your partner doesn't try to improve, this may become problematic. It's not healthy to constantly criticize each other or say intentionally hurtful things, especially about personal choices, such as food, clothing, or favorite TV shows. Criticism that makes you feel ashamed or bad about others, consider what this behavior says about them as a person. Maybe you don't feel heard because they seem disinterested when you bring up a problem or share something that's been on your mind. Or you might have a hard time sharing your opinion or talking about serious issues because you worry they'll just brush you off. Miscommunications can happen, of course. But if you do talk through an issue and they seem receptive but don't make any changes or seem to have completely forgotten what you talked about by the next day, that's also a warning sign. If your partner responds to your ideas. If you feel that you need to censor what you say or feel unsafe because you worry about your partner's reaction, consider leaving the relationship. You may also consider seeking professional help or speaking with a trusted loved one for support. You can reach out to the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit TheHotline.org for support and resources. It's difficult to apply the same standards to every relationship. However, if you're looking for guidance on whether yours is healthy, there are a few things you can ask yourself as a self-test. If some of the relationship red flags struck home, couples counseling might be a good step. "Couples therapy is about two people arriving to work on themselves," Antin said. Getting help doesn't mean you've failed. It means you want to work at improving, for yourselves and for each other. But even the healthiest of relationships can sometimes use a little extra work. Here are some tips to make sure things stay on the right track:embrace each other's differenceswork to solve problems as a teamtry new hobbies or activities together from person to person to person to person to person to feel heard approaching a safe space for each person to feel heard approaching disagreements without judgmentsetting and maintaining healthy boundaries f you're worried about your relationship or believe it's not as strong as it used to be, consider seeking professional support. A therapist can help offer guidance on when more effort might help and when it's time to move on. Read this article in Spanish