



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Intimate Relationships Continuum

All relationships exist on a continuum, ranging from healthy to unhealthy, with abusive at the extreme end. Relationships are not stationary. Rather they evolve and change depending on different situations or stressors.

A couple may naturally move back and forth between the healthy and struggling zones. If relationship issues are in the unhealthy zone they may need external support or intervention like therapy to help them get better. Unhealthy relationships can quickly escalate to an abusive situation.

The Intimate Relationships Continuum is modelled after the Mental Health Continuum color spectrum. However, it does not imply that being injured or ill (orange/red zone) necessitates that your relationship is the same colored zone. It is important to understand that no matter what zone you may be in on the Mental Health Continuum, it does not provide justification for engaging in unacceptable behavior or mistreating a partner. If you are engaging in these types of behaviors, or believe yourself at risk to do so, seek help immediately.

If any part of the relationship is in the abusive zone, a person's physical safety is the priority. External support and intervention is critical.

If you feel you are in immediate danger, reach out to the authorities or call 911.

Intimate Relationships Continuum

HEALTHY	STRUGGLING	UNHEALTHY	ABUSIVE
Relationship Characteristics			
Equality			
Respect	Pressure	Manipulation	Control
Trust	Dishonesty	Guilt and shame	Volatility
Communication	Lack of communication	Isolation	Violence
Safety			
<p>The relationship supports each partner's balance, well-being and sense of self. There is joy, peace, predictability and self-esteem. Partners have similar feelings about their relationship.</p>	<p>The relationship changes from a place of relative stability and predictability to a place of tension and uncertainty.</p> <p>There are growing gaps between each partner's feelings, needs and goals about the relationship.</p> <p>If action is not taken to restore the relationship's balance, it can progress towards the orange and red zones. Examples of actions that can help include spending time alone or as a couple, attending a communication workshops, etc.</p>	<p>The relationship affects and disrupts a partner's balance, well-being, and sense of self. There is isolation, guilt, shame, unpredictability and low self-esteem.</p> <p>The relationship may follow repeated cycles of escalation, outburst, forgiveness and honeymoon.</p> <p>The relationship may quickly escalate to an abusive situation.</p>	<p>Within the relationship, emotional, verbal, sexual, physical, financial, and/or social harm are occurring. This is known as intimate partner violence. The relationship is unhealthy and unsafe.</p> <p>It is important to protect physical safety before addressing the relationship.</p>

Intimate Relationships Chart

WHERE DOES MY RELATIONSHIP STAND?

How does the relationship feel?	Secure Safe Comfortable	Unsettled Uncertain	Insecure Hyper-vigilant	Unsafe Fearful
How do we talk to each other?	Respectfully Active listening	Ignoring opinions Cold or distant	Harsh comments Mocking Isolating or avoiding Disrespectfully	Intimidating Belittling Name calling
How do we treat each other?	Encouraging Caring for self Supporting dreams	Ignoring Discouraging	Demeaning Controlling Rejecting	Manipulating Hurtful Ridiculing
How are we intimate with each other?	Consensual Mutual fulfillment No pressure	No clear consent Passive manipulating	Guilt Coercion Degrading and shame	Nonconsensual Violence and force
How is our social life and network?	Network of friends and family Pursuing own interests	Tense with friends and family Withdrawing from social situations Questioning whereabouts	Friends and family are concerned Avoiding social interactions Isolating from friends Surveilling (social media, in-person)	Preventing social engagements Family and friends feel unsafe
How does our family get along?	Secure attachment Involvement in each other's lives Strong and clear boundaries	Limited engagement and time for family Inconsistent parenting	Tension Comparing and criticizing children Uninvolved in each other's lives	Scolding and intimidation Harsh verbal punishment Physical punishment
How do we handle money issues?	Sharing financial resources and decisions Transparency	One-sided financial decisions and spending Scrutinizing spending	Restricting spending Limiting/not sharing financial information	Moving money to prevent access Blocking access
How do we show anger?	Talking out problems Taking a break	Yelling Silent treatment	Indirect violence (breaking things, destroying property, slamming doors) Threatening violence (property, pets)	Direct violence (shoving, grabbing, shaking, hitting) Harming pets
	HEALTHY	STRUGGLING	UNHEALTHY	ABUSIVE