

Assessing Relationships

It's hard to know whether a relationship is healthy or not, especially if you grew up in a home that had a lot of conflict. If you grew up in conflict, you might assume it's normal. Below is a chart that compares behaviors of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

In a Healthy Relationship, people will	In an Unhealthy Relationship, people will
accept other's strengths and weaknesses	discount strengths or put their partner down for their weaknesses
accept other's differences & uniqueness	reject the differences of others and try to redefine their partner
accept emotional responsibility for self	blame others for their own faults
forgive themselves and others	be unforgiving, resentful, and bitter of others
will be honest with themselves and others	make excuses for their behavior
encourage personal growth in others	discourage personal growth in others
have a positive view of mistakes and see them as learning opportunities	have unrealistic expectations of self and others that can rarely be met
recognize their self-worth & value and that of others	over-emphasize their own self-importance and disregard others
allow room for friendships to develop outside of their relationship	be jealous, possessive, and manipulative
encourage with their words and action	put others down, be unkind and sarcastic
experience giving and receiving	give so they receive what they want
have healthy boundaries and respect others	have no boundaries and break other's boundaries
have balance between self-nurturing and focusing on the needs of others	be self-absorbed

Unhealthy Conflict

Conflict happens in *all relationships*. When conflict happens, it should be constructive - **not destructive**. Conflict is destructive when a person uses behaviors to emotionally or physically hurt or harm the other person. Most people don't like conflict and deal with it in a variety of unhealthy ways. Here are four different personalities when it comes to dealing with conflict.

- 1. The Avoider** simply avoids conflict, never really addressing the problem. This means you never really talk about the issues and pretend as if they don't exist. Avoiding conflict doesn't solve the problem.
- 2. The "Just Deal with It"** is someone who doesn't want to wait until they have calmed down to appropriately deal with a problem. They might demand you speak with them immediately. If you don't, they may follow you around becoming more and more aggressive.
- 3. The Punisher** takes your words as an attack and quickly attacks back. Punishers may yell or punish by using the silent treatment. In these situations, you are never really heard, and nothing gets resolved.
- 4. The Manipulator** uses tactics to confuse, such as asking questions completely unrelated to what you began talking about. They may put themselves down to turn the attention away from the real issue.

Healthy Conflict

When a conflict arises and it's dealt with appropriately, it can bring growth to the relationship. *The healthy approach to conflict is to listen and value each other's opinion.* We want our opinion valued. Healthy conflict resolution means we do the same for our partners. In healthy relationships, people listen and work to understand what's really going on *behind* the words.

When the Relationship Turns Abusive

Abuse is very confusing. He says he loves you, but his actions don't always reflect those feelings.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. Women who grew up in homes where abuse was present or who were sexually abused, are especially vulnerable to these unhealthy relationships. Your partner may have grown up in abuse as well. Growing up in abuse is the ***number one predictor that someone will repeat the pattern*** in adulthood. **A person's upbringing, addictions, or having a bad day never justifies the use of abuse.**

Abuse is a ***learned*** behavior, both the giving and the taking. This means someone has been conditioned through their environment to give abuse, accept being abused by others, or both. You only have the tools that you were given. You learn from those who raised you. Even if you didn't like what your parents did, you may still find yourself repeating the same negative patterns.