

CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY DATING RELATIONSHIPS

- 1. Respect** This starts with respecting yourself and knowing your own worth. It also means accepting each other's opinions, values, limits and need for individual time.
- 2. Equality** This is at the center of a healthy dating relationship. Power is balanced in the relationship. Neither person has unfair advantage over the other due to age, power, or maturity. During the teen years when one partner is three or more years older, the relationship is often unequal.
- 3. Open Communication** Communication is good. Both people talk and listen. It's important to be able to say what you're really thinking and feeling – to be open, clear and honest.
- 4. Honesty and Accountability** Telling each other the truth, keeping your word, being faithful, and being able to admit when you're wrong increases trust.
- 5. Trust and Support** Trust must be strong and both partners must feel safe. You learn to trust by observing over time and in different situations that you can depend on someone. It takes time to build trust. You should want the best for each other and offer encouragement when needed.
- 6. Negotiation and Conflict Management** People who are dating recognize when they have conflict and manage it without violence. Managing conflict is a skill you can learn and practice. Communication is especially important when there is a conflict. Listen to each other, respect differences, compromise, talk about past disagreements and figure out what to do differently in the future.
- 7. Shared Responsibility** People who are dating make decisions together and have “give and take” in the relationship. They share the costs of hanging out and having fun together and do things that are enjoyable for both people. Relationships should be mutual, not one-sided.
- 8. Friendship, Admiration and Affection** Friendship is the basis of the relationship. The person you're dating should be someone you like, admire and respect. Never try to change your boyfriend or girlfriend or to be someone that you're not. Spend time enjoying similar interests and keep the friendship alive.

KEEP IN MIND:

- To have a healthy relationship, it's important to love and take care of yourself before and while you're in the relationship.
- Healthy relationships increase your energy for the things in your life. The relationship inspires you rather than drains you.

HEALTHY DATING RELATIONSHIPS *Continued*

- A caring boyfriend or girlfriend will motivate and support you rather than confine or control you.
- It's never a good idea to completely wrap yourself up in someone to the exclusion of your family and friends.
- No relationship is perfect. There will be ups and downs in any relationship.
- Relationships that have a lot of conflict or violence of any type (verbal, physical, emotional or sexual) are not healthy.
- If a little voice inside you is saying that something's not right in the relationship, listen! Talk with someone you trust, other than your partner, about these concerns.