# What Does a Healthy Relationship Look Like?

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Healthy, functional relationships have these characteristics — which apply especially to committed romantic relationships. When they are missing, it's important to address the problem.

## 1. Trust
Without trust, you will be left constantly unsure of whether you can count on your partner to come through for you, and whether or not they really mean what they are saying.

## 2. Communication
Communicating honestly and respectfully, especially about things that are difficult, is something that does not come automatically to everyone. We may have learned to keep uncomfortable things under the surface for the sake of harmony or the appearance of perfection, or we also may have never even learned how to acknowledge difficult feelings to ourselves. Other challenges involve lacking the ability to not take things over-personally or lashing out when we feel threatened.

## 3. Patience
Partners in a healthy, loving relationship extend each other a basic common denominator of patience that allows for peace, flexibility, and support when one person is having a bad day or is not at their best. Being able to adjust to the ebbs and flows of a partner's moods— within reason — can allow a feeling of being unconditionally loved.

## 4. Empathy
Being willing to take another person's perspective is helpful in so many cases — whether in parenting, being a good neighbor, or even just letting someone merge in front of you on the highway. Can you truly put forth the effort to try to understand their perspective, even when you disagree with it? Does their pain spur you to try to help them feel better? Do you feel happy about their triumphs?

## 5. Affection and Interest
Both are truly interested in each other and fond of each other. Small physical gestures of affection, like hugs, kisses, and comforting touch, can go a long way to keeping each person feeling comforted and secure within their relationship.

## 6. Flexibility
Relationships take compromise. It's important that both partners show flexibility in day-to-day life and decision-making, because if it is just one partner always doing the bending, that imbalance can grow toxic over time. In healthy relationships, both partners are willing to adjust as needed to the changes and growth that may come about during a relationship. And they are able to evaluate on a joint level, especially during conflicts, what matters most to each person within the relationship, and how that should be prioritized.

## 7. Appreciation

Gratitude makes us feel happier and more secure with our partners, which also improves the relationship's well-being. Even small expressions of gratitude and appreciation can help improve relationship satisfaction. Say "thank you" for something your partner did.

## 8. Room for Growth

Hopes, fears, goals, and interests constantly evolve, and that is a good thing. A relationship doesn't have to suffer because of this, as long as both people allow each other the space to grow, by not pigeonholing each other, and by trying to take an interest in learning what's important to the other person.

## 9. Respect

Respect is very important within a close relationship. In healthy relationships, people talk to each other in ways that don't debase, invalidate, or belittle. They value each other's time and opinions like they value their own. They protect each other's privacy and don't use each other as the butt of jokes or as thankless help for menial tasks.

## 10. Reciprocity

In healthy relationships, you both just generally do for each other when needed. In an ideal situation, the give-and-take roughly works out to equal over time, and neither partner feels resentful. Of course, in many relationships, the give-and-take won't ever become equal. And that can be okay, as long as both partners feel comfortable overall with the level of give-and-take as it exists, and they each find a way to give *something* to the relationship and their partners — especially in the form of emotional support — when they can.

## 11. Healthy Conflict Resolution

Healthy couples express their emotions and work to resolve them as they come up, even when it causes conflict. They refrain from stonewalling and escalating into personal attacks when there is a difference of opinion or a problem. They are able to talk it through with respect, empathy, and understanding.

## 12. Individuality and Boundaries

In a healthy relationship, similarities create a foundation to connect with each other, while individual differences are respected and valued. It's important that each partner is given the freedom to live their own life, especially in terms of friendships, professional goals, and hobbies. Each person has aspects of their lives that are theirs alone, and that boundary must be respected by both parties.

## 13. Openness and Honesty

There are different levels of openness within relationships — some share the most intimate of physical details with each other. Some are open about hopes, dreams, and even the details of one's workday. But no matter where you fall on the spectrum, it's important that honesty underlies whatever disclosures you make. Partners who mask their true selves, hide their emotional realities or actively deceive their partners about their habits and behaviors are jeopardizing the fundamental foundation of trust that every relationship needs.