

THE GARDNER NEWS **The ABCs of healthy relationships**

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The journey to healthy relationships for victims of domestic violence can be a challenge. Usually, this process can begin once they have started to enter the survivor stage of their lives. Most people, in general, do not know where to start to develop healthy relationships. The key to healthy relationships is to allow partners to feel supported and connected but still feel independent.

The ABCs of healthy relationships refer to Attitude, Boundaries and Communication. Trauma, abuse, neglect and general chaos in people's lives makes establishment difficult but by no means impossible.

Communication and boundaries are the two major components of healthy relationships. Attitudes were developed from individuals' background and experiences. In the case of domestic violence, the attitudes most exhibited are negativity, lack of trust and hope. These attitudes can be turned around when positive communication and proper boundaries are learned and practiced.

Ultimately, the two people in the relationship decide what is healthy for them and what is not. If something does not feel right, you should have the freedom to voice your concerns to your partner — this would be a strange thought to most domestic violence abuse victims. This allows for partners to have a deep understanding of each other and help you connect. This type of communication promotes feelings and attitudes new to the relationship: respect, openness of thought and feelings, a sense of being heard, and objective feedback rather than criticism usually expected in unhealthy relationships. A celebration of one another's accomplishments and successes are a rich and needed addition to their lives.

Boundaries allow expression of what partners do and do not feel comfortable when it comes to sex life, finances, family and friends, personal space and time. These boundaries allow each other to use their time freely without imposed restrictions. The "check-in" imposed by power and control relationships would no longer be present. No longer would technology be used to track the comings and goings of either partner or find cheating or infidelity.

What a journey this would be to offer hope and independence to partners. If you are interested, please go to healthyrelationships20@gmail.com to sign up for our remote online group.

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