

RELATIONSHIPS

What is a healthy relationship?

A healthy relationship is one that makes you **feel good about yourself**. You enjoy being together and you both can express your true self.

In a **healthy relationship**, you are able to:

- Treat each other with respect
- Feel comfortable, secure and can be yourself
- Support one another
- Communicate openly
- Trust each other
- Encourage other friendships
- Use 'fair' argument discussions (no name calling, use 'I feel...' instead of 'you should...' statements)
- Have fun together
- Be dependable
- Both compromise, apologize and share differences and opinions openly

The acronym SHARE can help to remember these qualities.

Safety - You feel "safe" in a healthy relationship

Honesty - You don't hide anything from each other

Acceptance - You both accept each other as you are

Respect - You think highly of each other

Enjoyment - You enjoy each other

Unfortunately, sometimes we experience unhealthy relationships.

In an **unhealthy relationship**, one or both of you **may**:

- Try to control the other – **can't be yourself**
- Be afraid to disagree
- Discourage or limit other close friendships
- Be overly possessive or jealous
- Prevent one another from doing things you enjoy
- Criticize or humiliate one another in front of others
- Push, shove, grab, hit or throw objects or physically be aggressive in any way
- Harm or threaten to harm each other's personal objects
- Do physical, emotional or sexual harm
- Lie or fail to tell each other important things about yourself

Any of these behaviours are not healthy for you.

A person who treats you like this does not respect you no matter what they say.

It is everyone's right to end unhealthy relationships. Trust your instincts and discuss your feelings with someone you trust.

Question 1

Think of a relationship that is important to you (someone you are dating, seeing, hanging out with or a family member). Using the above information, what type of relationship is this?
What makes it healthy or unhealthy?

Some ways to end an unhealthy relationship include:

- **Be clear** - Don't lie, avoid the other person, be manipulative or play games
- **Be respectful** - Communicate your feelings and your intention to end the relationship clearly and compassionately; don't wait and drag it out
- **Be honest**

Question 2

Think of a relationship that did not, or currently doesn't, make you feel good about yourself. How did or will you end it? What words did you or will you use? (You can use a movie or television relationship, if easier).

MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT SEX

It is simply not true that 'everyone is doing it'.

Only you can decide how far you want to go.

If anyone tries to pressure you into a choice that does not feel right, walk away.

Few people regret having sex too late, **more regret getting into things too quickly.**

It's your right to decide about sex!

Everyone deserves to feel
safe, valued and
cared for

WHAT IS ABSTINENCE?

Abstinence means choosing to wait for now. Abstinence means different things to different people.

To some it may mean:

- No sexual activity including vaginal, oral or anal intercourse
- No sexual touching at all
- No skin to skin contact
- Everything but vaginal intercourse
- Some sexual touching or kissing

There are many reasons **you may choose to wait**, including:

- No need to worry about unplanned pregnancy
- Less risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV
- More time to build your relationship and grow and mature together
- No worries about your reputation
- Feeling better about yourself by making the decision that it is best for you right now
- Having fun exploring creative ways to express your affection and sexuality i.e., handholding, kissing and hugging
- Sticking to your values and/or religious beliefs
- More opportunities in enjoying your youth and focusing on reaching your life goals

If you decide **being abstinent is the right choice for you**, here are some tips:

- Make sure you are **clear** about your decision
- Know your **sexual limits and boundaries**
- **Talk to your partner about what you want, don't want and why before you get sexually excited or 'down to business'**
- **Party safely.** It's a lot harder to stick with your decision when you have been drinking alcohol or using drugs
- If you find yourself **being pressured** by 'the heat of the moment', do something else to change the mood
- Hang out with a group of friends who support your decision

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I AM READY FOR SEX?

Individuals have different personal values and beliefs regarding sex. Sex **must have mutual consent** and agreement from both partners ('giving in' because of fear is not consent). Sex too early in a relationship can actually prevent intimacy.

If you are considering having sex, you may want to ask yourself:

- Do I know enough about my partner?
- Am I emotionally and physically ready for this?
- Is it in conflict with my beliefs and values?
- Am I feeling pressured into making a decision?
- Do I really want this?
- What does having sex mean to me and my partner?
What if it means different things?
- How will having sex affect my relationship?
- Do you know enough about preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections?
- Do I understand what consent means?

If you can't even discuss sex with someone you trust you are not ready to have sex.

What are some unhealthy reasons for having sex?

- To do what others are doing
- Being drunk and/or high
- To be popular
- To improve the relationship
- To prove you are grown up
- To rebel
- Too embarrassed to say STOP

Having sex with a person who is passed out or too impaired to give voluntary consent is a form of **sexual assault**.

Question 3

**a) When you are considering being sexually active, who can you talk to?
I.e., parent, trusted adult, York Region Sexual Health phone line or clinic...**

b) Where would you get accurate and confidential information on birth control options?

c) What is the only birth control option that also protects you from STIs?

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

STI Facts

- Chlamydia, Herpes and HPV are the most common STIs
- STIs, including Chlamydia, often have no symptoms at all
- Chlamydia and Gonorrhea can be tested simply by providing a urine sample from males and females

Preventing STIs

- It's your responsibility to protect yourself
- Consistent proper condom use is the best way to protect yourself
- Vaccines and vaccine information are available free of charge at the sexual health clinics

STI testing

- You need STI testing when you have symptoms
- STI testing is recommended when you have a new partner or your partner has tested positive for an STI
- All STI testing and treatment is **free and confidential** at York Region Sexual Health Clinics

Question 4

a) How would you prevent STIs?

b) What are your risks related to oral sex? (Include physical and emotional risks)

DECISION MAKING

We all must make many difficult decisions throughout our lifetime. Some decisions are more difficult than others because of pressures from other sources such as peers or the media. Many decisions relate to life choices and others to sexual issues. Some may have serious consequences such as drinking and driving or having unprotected sex.

Decision-making is a process that can be learned and improved with practice. It helps to have accurate information when you must make a decision. Your beliefs and values will also affect the decisions you make.

You matter,
your choices matter,
you decide what is right
for you.

Question 5

a) Think of a recent decision you made or need to make.

What steps did you or will you consider in making the right decision for you?

b) How does alcohol and drugs affect your decision making?
