

Healthy Relationships

All relationships are different. It is impossible to give one definition of a healthy relationship because we all want different things from our relationships. Where one couple enjoys fairly constant time together, another couple will need significant time apart. A particular couple may desire similar religious beliefs, but another couple will thrive and grow with differences. It is easier to define an unhealthy relationship than to define a healthy one. However, there are a few commonalities that most people will agree are components of a healthy relationship.

1. Thoughtfulness: Do you enjoy doing special things for each other that show your appreciation for your partner's interests or unique qualities? Can you spot an item in a store that your partner would enjoy? Can you buy tickets to a concert or athletic event that would interest the other person? In a healthy relationship both individuals should be enjoying doing things for the other.
2. Love: We all want to be loved unconditionally. Unconditional love means that you love one another in spite of conditions or events. Ask the other person: Would you love me if I lost my _____? Fill in the blank with any condition in your life (money, looks, job, status, etc.) Don't be afraid to ask or to consider your own answer to this important question. We all want and deserve to be loved for our essence – not the surface things that we provide to the other.
3. Security: When you are apart, do you trust your partner to continue to care and be faithful or do you live with uncertainty?
4. Happiness: Do you generally feel positive around your partner or do you feel pained? You should feel all sorts of good things (happy, peaceful, alive, or excited) rather than painful emotions (distress, sadness, bored, or criticized).
5. Honest Communication: Can you be completely honest and open about your thoughts or emotions or do you have to conceal parts of yourself for fear of disapproval or criticism? Can you share your deepest dreams and fears and feel heard, understood, and appreciated?
6. Consideration: Will your partner respond with effort if you make a request, even if it doesn't make sense to the other person and isn't what they would want? Even if it might take effort on their part? Will you do the same?
7. Compatibility: Do you have similar values in life on the important things, including gender roles, family, friends, children, and sex. You don't have to agree or be just like one another but there should be basic agreement on things that are important to you.
8. Commitment: Do you both have a strong desire to make this relationship work and a willingness to work out disagreements?

Don't think of a relationship as a long-term love affair. It is much more rewarding and requires much more work.