With Valentine’s Day on the horizon it’s time to reflect on how relationships can impact on our mental health. Whether you have met that ‘special person’ or you are still waiting on the ‘one’ it’s important to note that relationships are a two-way street. To build and maintain a healthy relationship you and your partner have to ensure that you are considerate and respectful of each other’s rights in the relationship; a healthy relationship involves maintaining and reciprocating these essential elements of trust and respect.

How do I know if my relationship is healthy?

You…

* Respect each other.
* Trust each other.
* Are honest with each other.
* Communicate clearly with each other.
* Willing to compromise/negotiate.
* Support each other.
* Enjoy spending time with each other & feel safe and comfortable with each other.
* Maintain healthy lives and other relationships outside of this relationship.

What might an unhealthy relationship look like?

Sometimes, it’s difficult to know whether your relationship is healthy or unhealthy. A relationship can be unhealthy in many ways, including emotionally, sexually, physically, and/or verbally. If you find that your relationship is unhealthy, you can work to improve the issue, or you can get out of the relationship. No one deserves to feel disrespected, unsafe, or insecure in their relationship.

Some examples of characteristics of an unhealthy relationship include:

* Trying to control or manipulate the other person.
* Making the other person feel bad about her/himself, ridicules, blames, or call names.
* Dictates how the other person dresses.
* Does not make time for each other.
* Criticizes the other person’s friends.
* Are afraid of the other person’s temper.
* Ignore each other when one is speaking.
* Are overly possessive or get jealous about ordinary behaviour.
* Criticizes or supports others in criticizing some aspect of the other person.
* Controls the other person’s money or other resources (e.g., car).
* Harm or threaten to harm family, pets, or objects of personal value.
* Push, grab, hit, punch, or throw objects.
* Use physical force or threatens to prevent the other person from leaving.
* Force the other to have sex when he/she doesn’t want to or is incapacitated, threatens the other person if he/she doesn’t.

Carecall’s top tips for maintaining a healthy relationship:

* Set expectations for your relationship with your partner – and realize that, as your relationship develops, expectations may change. Always be respectfully direct and honest with them about what you want and expect out of the relationship, and do the same for them.
* Notice small things - appreciate them, complement them, say “thank you” when appropriate.
* Say “I’m sorry” when you’re wrong.
* Try new things together.
* Don’t let little stuff build up.
* Communicate – often, and clearly - don’t forget to listen to each other.
* Figure out your relationship wants vs. needs – it’s a part of being realistic, while ensuring healthy relationship standards.
* Reciprocate.
* Be honest.
* Keep up other friendships, relationships, activities, and important stuff in your life.
* Address divergent family values and issues – if and before they become an issue. Accept differences, and consider whether or not some family-related factor is significant enough to affect your relationship with your partner. If it is, talk about it. If a family member is being particularly intrusive, figure out ways to get them to back off.
* Realise that you can leave.

Don’t forget, if you are having relationship difficulties, or any other problems, you can contact your confidential, free counselling service 24/7, 365 days a year by calling 0808 800 0016