

Relationships

Quality, healthy relationships are essential to your wellbeing - social connection is important for your physical, emotional and mental health. You are happier and more satisfied with your life when you are connected to others in a positive and healthy way.

Relationships are not always easy, they take work and can bring a roller coaster of emotions. Sometimes they end, bringing feelings of grief and loss. For more information see the [Grief and loss information sheet](#).

Learning skills to build and maintain healthy relationships with romantic partners, family, parents, children, friends, workmates, other students and the people you come in contact with in daily life, are important life skills.

Learning skills to recognise unhealthy relationships is also important – it can help you make decisions on what is or isn't working, when to end a relationship, and can help keep you safe.

Key factors for developing healthy relationships

Trust. Talk honestly to each other and follow through with promises that you make. Accept and trust the other person's decisions, in what they do, who they talk to, where they go, and how they live their life. Prove to each other that you are reliable, responsible, and dependable.

Support. Be encouraging and supportive of each other's decisions and goals. Believe in each other. Think about how you might want to be supported particularly when there are challenges or you are feeling down about yourself. Talk and act in supportive ways.

Respect. Respect yourself, the other person, and the relationship. Each of you should have independence and freedom to express your opinion, and make choices and decisions. Compromise together, respect each other's boundaries, and encourage each other to spend time with important others.

Healthy conflict resolution. All relationships have conflict. Manage conflict respectfully, seek mutually satisfying outcomes, and be willing to compromise. Remember that both of you have different views of the world - you can't change how the other person thinks, feels or acts - focus on what you can control which is your own response to the world around you.

Shared activities and friendship. Spend time with the other person. What makes them happy, joyful, and excited? Let them know how you are feeling, how your day and week has been. Keep in touch with what's important for each of you.

Love and affection. We all have different ways of feeling loved. Find out what is important for the other person, and share what is important for you. Don't assume you both need love and affection in the same way.

Positivity. All relationships have some negativity and conflict, however aim to keep your relationship more positive than negative! Research shows that stable and more long-lasting relationships have five positive interactions for every negative one! Relationships are not always positive, but work on having a good balance.

Communication. Share information freely with the other person, and listen as much as you talk. Pay attention to not just what they are saying but how they are looking and acting. Respond in a thoughtful and kind way, the same way you would like to be responded to.

Commitment. Make your relationship a priority and work on the areas above, particularly when either of you is having a bad time. Often during bad times you may feel like pulling away, but this is exactly when you need to work on coming together.

Recognising unhealthy relationships

Sometimes relationships have an imbalance of power and control. Instead of the relationship having equality and mutual respect, one person may try to have power and control over the other person. Some relationships start out unhealthy and sometimes they develop into unhealthy relationship over time. Recognise the signs and consider ending the relationship, if safe to do so, or seek help.

Signs of an unhealthy relationship may include:

- Threatening words and behaviours
- Intimidating words and actions
- Unkindness through making you feel bad about yourself and your actions
- Isolating you from friends and family, and controlling what you do and who you see
- Minimising your concerns and blaming you for issues in the relationship
- Using children to make you feel guilty or threatened
- Using “male privilege” to define roles and make decisions
- Controlling your access to money and how you spend it
- Physical or sexual violence

If you are experiencing any of these signs in an intimate or family relationship you may be experiencing domestic and family violence. Seek help. The National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service is available 24/7 to provide information and support – Call 1800 Respect (1800 737 732).

If you need support to leave immediately call DV Connect on 1800 811 81. **If you are in immediate danger call 000.**

If your relationship is experiencing challenges, or you feel you don't have the skills to further develop your relationship then seek help.

If you are concerned about a friend or family member – look for the signs that something's not okay, talk with them about what's going on, listen to their experience, and seek help together.

Contact JCU Student Equity and Wellbeing

- Townsville **4781 4711**
- Cairns **4232 1150**
- email studentwellbeing@jcu.edu.au
- or drop in to Level 1 Library at both campuses

Alternatively, you could see your doctor or other mental health professional or call:

- Family Relationships Helpline on 1800 05 0 321.

Further information and support

- A Guide to Successful Relationships – Relationships Australia- https://racr.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Partners_A-guide_Web.pdf
- Healthy Relationships – Love is Respect - www.loveisrespect.org/healthy-relationships/
- Relationships Australia - www.raq.org.au - support and counselling service
- Family Relationship Helpline - <https://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/talk-someone/advice-line>
- Five Love Languages - www.5lovelanguages.com/
- What is Domestic and Family Violence? - www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/about-domestic-family-violence/
- Support and Advice for Domestic and Family Violence - www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-