

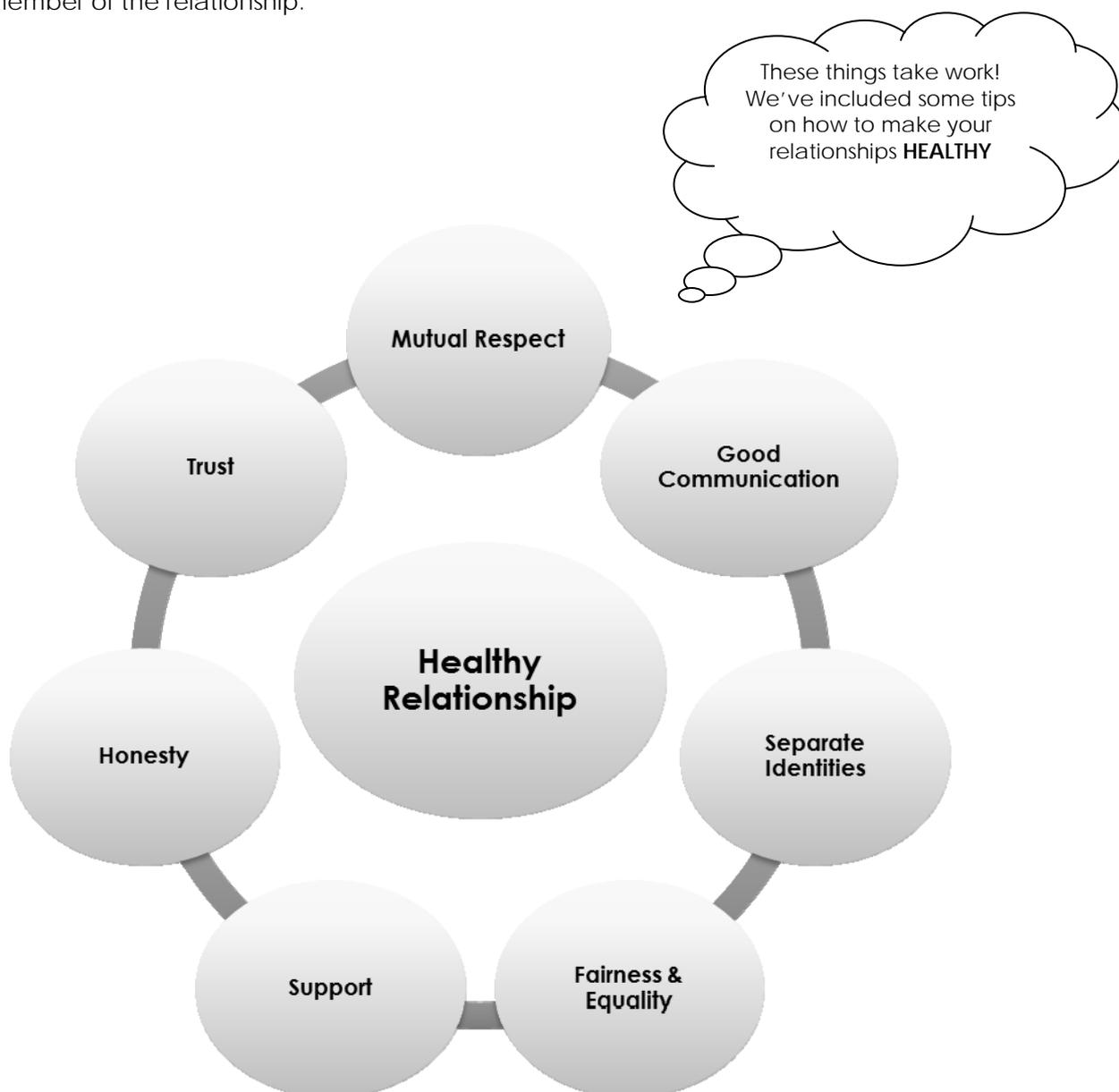
Relationship Difficulties

What is a relationship? A relationship is defined as the state of being connected or related, association by blood or marriage; kinship; the mutual dealings, connections, or feelings that exist between two parties, countries, people; or an emotional/sexual affair or liaison.

"You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection." - Buddha

About relationships: As you can see by the definition, relationship difficulties do not always have to be about love and romance. We may find we have relationship difficulties with family, friends, acquaintances, work colleagues, lecturers, and more. Every day we meet new people and develop new relationships. We have a natural tendency to develop a few intimate and intense relationships with a few select and significant others, which can bring joy and happiness into our lives. On the other hand these significant relationships can also result in pain, hurt, guilt, anger and disappointment.

What makes a healthy relationship? A healthy relationship should bring more happiness than stress into your life. Every relationship will have stress at times, but you want to prevent prolonged mental stress on either member of the relationship.



Relationship Difficulties



Most relationships tend to be a combination of both unhealthy and healthy characteristics. Healthy relationships take time and effort to make them work for both parties involved. This applies to all relationships whether they are work relationships, friendships, family, or romantic relationships.

What are signs of a healthy relationship? If you are in a healthy relationship you will experience more happiness than stress during the course of the relationship. No relationship is perfect, and all relationships can include stressful periods however, if you find that there seems to be a lot of stressful times within your relationship, you may need to evaluate whether it is healthy for the relationship to continue.

FEATURES OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

In healthy relationships both parties will:

- Have respect for each other's individuality and privacy
- Have respect for each other's sexual boundaries
- Have good self esteem separate to the relationship
- Be able to engage in solo activities
- Be able to express your opinions and ideas to each other without fear of reproach or negative consequences
- Feel secure/ comfortable
- Encourage each other to have other friendships/relationships
- Not feel fearful about violence within their relationship Be trustworthy, and have trust in each other
- Allow for influence from their partner. Work towards resolving any conflicts by "fighting fair". Most relationships will experience conflict at some time, making sure that it is dealt with safely and fairly is very important.

What are the signs of an unhealthy relationship? As stated above, all relationships can experience discord or conflict at some time and that is normal, however in an unhealthy relationship conflict and discord are commonplace which is very unhealthy for both of the people involved in the relationship.

FEATURES OF UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

In unhealthy relationships one of both parties may:

- Neglect the other and put one person before the other Feel pressure to change themselves for the other person
- Feel scared or concerned about disagreeing with their partner
- Stop engaging in activities that they used to enjoy
- Put pressure on the other person to agree with them
- Make the other partner justify their actions (e.g. where you go, who you see)
- Make the other partner feel obligated to have sex or force them to have sex when they do not want to
- Feel as though they have no privacy and that they have to disclose everything they do to their partner
- Be resistant to using contraception/safe sex methods
- not fight fairly
- Endure physical or emotional violence whilst fighting (e.g.: yelling, hitting, pushing)
- Try to control and/or manipulate their partner
- Try to control the way the other person dresses



Relationship Difficulties

- Criticize the behavior of the other person
- Be reluctant to spend time with the other person
- Be aware of an unequal control of money, food and other resources that should be shared in a relationship
- Have a lack of respect for the other person's family and friends
- Feel that equality and fairness is not present in the relationship.

Signs that you may need to seek help or support

- If your partner is physically, sexually, or emotionally abusive
- If your partner is manipulative, coercive, or tries to force you to do something against your will
- If you are unhappy in the relationship, but need some help deciding what to do about it
- If you have decided to leave a relationship, but are having difficulties doing so
- If you think you are staying out of fear, guilt, a sense of duty, to avoid being alone, or other inappropriate reasons
- If you have a history of unhealthy relationships
- If your friends, family, or other significant people in your life are worried about your relationship
- If you just need to talk to someone to help you to process things

**Free, confidential counselling available for currently enrolled students at
USQ Student Services**
Toowoomba Campus, G Block Ph: (07) 4631 2372
Springfield Campus Level 3 Main Building Ph: (07) 3470 4400
Fraser Coast Campus Student Hub C Block Ph: (07) 4194 3125

[Sources: Adapted from material originally found on the [UW-Seattle Hall Health Center Website](#) and Woodford, J. (February 2007). [Ten tips for healthy relationships](#). Mental Health Matters. 4(4). Gratiot Medical Center: An Affiliate of MidMichigan Health]