

# Healthy Connections Checkup

As we navigate the world of growing up, we have relationships – family, friends, classmate, teammates, and more. Understanding what makes these connections healthy is important. So, here are some questions for you to answer: “Yes” or “No” and see how healthy your relationships are.

Here’s a quick temperature check. Use the questions below to learn more about your relationships. There’s no right or wrong. Your connections are unique and always changing. **You can use the questions for different relationships and come back to it anytime.**

	Yes	No
1. Do you and your friend(s)/partner(s) respect each other and avoid putting each other down?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Can you still be friends or have a relationship with someone even if you like different things?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Can you share your feelings, wants, and needs with your friend(s)/partner(s) without being judged?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does your friend(s)/partner(s) give you words of encouragement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Can you and your friend(s)/partner(s) have other friends and still be close to each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you and your friend(s)/partner(s) fight?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you feel comfortable and safe with your friend(s)/partner(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Did both you and your friend(s)/partner(s) happily agree to be friends or in the relationship?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Scoring: count the number of "Yes" responses.**

## **8 "Yes" responses**

Your friendship or relationship shows many healthy parts.

## **5-7 "Yes" responses**

There may be some healthy parts, but certain areas might need attention and improvement.

## **0-4 "Yes" responses**

Your friendship or relationship may have problems that you need to talk about and maybe change.

Remember that this is just a start. Speak openly and honestly with your friend(s) about how your friendship(s)/relationship(s) are doing and what might need work.

# Recognizing Healthy and Stormy Bonds

Relationships are an important part of our lives at all ages. They can bring joy, support, and memorable moments. However, it's important to understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy patterns to ensure our connections are fulfilling and safe.

## Building Strong Connections: What a Healthy Relationship Looks Like!

**Respectful Foundation:** It all begins with respect! Treat each other with kindness and appreciation.

**Be Authentically Yourself:** Be You! Share what you like and don't like without any worries.

**Open Communication:** Talking is easy! Talking about your wants and needs with each other.

**Fun Times:** Having a blast together is big! Enjoy fun moments with each other and others.

**Friendship Freedom:** You're free to have other friends! No jealousy or limits are placed on you. Don't feel guilty when you hang out with different people.

**Kindness Matters:** Being kind is a must! Friendly and non-hurtful behaviour keeps things positive.

**Comfort and Safety:** Feel comfortable and safe! That's how it should be when you're together and apart.

**Understanding and Accepting:** You agree and understand each other willingly and respectfully. It's okay to agree to disagree!

### Hot Tip!

If any troubles come up, openly talk about your feelings with the person involved.

Reach out to a trusted friend, teacher, or family member for advice, vent or options on how to handle what is happening.

Focus on keeping open communication and understanding.

## Stormy Relationships: When Should You Be Concerned?

In relationships that might not be healthy, watch out for:

**Respecting Boundaries (Limits):** Not respecting each other's boundaries and feelings.

**Communication Breakdown:** Refusing to talk about issues leads to annoyance and frustration.

**Jealousy Alert:** Feeling too much jealousy or possessiveness makes you uncomfortable.

**Humour Gone:** Saying mean or sarcastic jokes that put you down. "I was just joking, don't be like that!"

**Control Issues:** One person tries to control everything and make all the decisions.

**Mood Rollercoaster:** Mood swings or explosive anger that are hard to expect.

**Isolation Attempts:** Tries to keep you away from friends, family, or other interests.

### Storm Protection!

Talk about challenges directly with the person involved.

Reach out to a trusted adult or counsellor. Trust your gut. If it doesn't feel right, it's most likely not right!

If it's safe, set clear boundaries and communicate expectations.

# Recognizing Healthy and Stormy Bonds

## Recognize Tornado Storm (Abuse): The Dangers of Unhealthy Behaviours

In relationships, abuse means more than just unhealthy behaviours. It's important to watch out for:

**Physical Boundaries:** Physical abuse, like hitting, pushing, or shoving. This is never okay.

**Words Matter:** Emotional or verbal abuse means using hurtful words, name-calling, threats, or insults.

**Unwanted Touch:** Sexual abuse is forcing unwanted sexual activities like kissing, touching, and sex, which is never okay.

**Financial Control:** Financial abuse includes controlling how you spend your money, taking it, making you pay for things stopping you from spending it freely.

**Online/ Technology Boundaries:** Online abuse, using technology for cyberbullying, is harmful and illegal!

**Decision-Making:** Controlling behaviour, where one person makes all decisions.

**Personal Space:** Stalking is watching your online and offline activities, and it's not **okay**.

**Manipulative (Tricky) Tactics:** Manipulation is harmful, especially making someone feel that what they are seeing or experiencing is not real, that no one else will believe them.

**Isolation Warning:** Isolation is a serious concern, keeping you away from loved ones and activities you like.

Understanding these dangers helps you identify and address unhealthy behaviours in relationships.

### Tornado Protection!

#### Immediate Action:

Trust your instincts/gut. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

Ask for help if you're unsure how to handle a situation.

Speak to a trusted adult, teacher, or counsellor.

#### Build a Support System:

Share your experiences with someone you trust.

Create a safety plan for yourself.

Trusting your feelings in relationships is like having your own personal compass that helps you navigate friendships, dating, and partnerships. Like a compass, your inner feelings can guide you in the right direction and help you make choices that side with your values and beliefs. Your gut can be a powerful tool that alerts you to tornados and make sure you are safe. Always remember to listen to your inner compass and trust your instincts.



# When Things Get Stormy!

## Warning signs!

Just like weather experts keep an eye out for signs of approaching storms, we can look for warning signs in our relationships. These are like signals that something might not be quite right. Paying attention to these signs can help us stay safe and happy. Let's explore some of these signs in relationships together!



### Constant Criticism

Person 1 accidentally drops their lunchbox, spilling its contents during lunch. **Person 1:** "Oops, my lunch!" **Person 2:** "You're so clumsy! Can't you be more careful?"



### Deflection and Avoidance

Person 1 tries to talk to Person 2 about a disagreement they had in class. **Person 1:** "Hey, can we talk about what happened earlier?" **Person 2:** "I'm busy right now. Let's talk later."



### Blame-Shifting

During a group project, Person 1 forgets to print out a page, causing the team to lose points. **Person 1:** "Sorry, I forgot to print that page." **Person 2:** "It's your fault! We lost marks because of you."



### Control and Manipulation

Person 1 suggests playing a game with their friends, but Person 2 insists on choosing the game. **Person 1:** "Let's play soccer!" **Person 2:** "No way, I want to play basketball. You always get your way."



### Isolation Attempts

Person 1 excitedly tells Person 2 about their plans to hang out with a new friend after school. **Person 1:** "I'm going to Sarah's house today!" **Person 2:** "You're always with her. You don't need me anymore."



### Disregard for Boundaries

Person 1 confides in Person 2 about a secret hobby, but Person 2 shares it with others without Person 1's consent. **Person 1:** "I trusted you with that!" **Person 2:** "Oh, lighten up! It's not a big deal."



### Gaslighting

Person 1 recalls Person 2 promising to save them a seat on the bus but Person 2 denies ever making the promise. **Person 1:** "You said you'd save me a seat." **Person 2:** "No, I didn't. You must have misunderstood."



### Always Being Negative

Person 1 shares their excitement about joining a school club, but Person 2 brushes it off. **Person 1:** "I joined the art club!" **Person 2:** "Art is boring anyway. You'll get tired of it."



### Entitlement

Person 1 receives a small gift for Person 2's birthday, but Person 2 complains it's not what they wanted. **Person 1:** "I got you this keychain for your birthday!" **Person 2:** "That's it? You should have gotten me something better."



### Lack of Apology or Accountability

Person 1 accidentally bumps into Person 2, causing them to spill their drink, but Person 1 doesn't apologize. **Person 1:** "Oops, watch where you're going!" **Person 2:** "You never say sorry when you mess up."

Recognizing these signs and talking to a trusted adult if something feels off is important. Your feelings matter: you deserve to be in safe and respectful relationships!

# Talk it Out: Course Correction Tips!

Imagine you are on a journey towards better connections with your family, friends, teachers, and others around you. Good communication helps so much on this journey. It means expressing yourself while also respecting the other person's feelings. It looks like taking turns talking and listening to each other. Using kind words and actions, and cheering each other on!

## 2. Be Clear and Honest:

No one can read minds! Speak directly about your thoughts, feelings, and needs. Being clear and honest helps avoid misunderstandings, making it easier to understand each other.

## 4. Trust Each Other:

Trust your friend/ partner unless they give you a reason not to. Building trust is the foundation for strong and safe relationships.

## 6. Talk Face-to-Face:

Skip the texts and DMs for important talks. Chat in person or by video chat. Hearing their voice and seeing their face helps you better understand each other.

## 8. Own Up:

Be ready to take responsibility and apologize. Everyone makes mistakes. Apologizing and meaning it helps both of you move on after a situation. Sometimes, the other person may not be ready to receive your apology, and that's okay, too. Give the person time to process what happened.

Good communication helps make your relationships fun and happy. If you ever make a mistake, it's important to say sorry and mean it. If you ever need extra help or advice, you can talk to a grown-up you trust, like a teacher or a counsellor for support and guidance.

Remember, good communication is like playing on a team - you both have a part in making it work! Just like practicing a sport or learning an instrument, getting better takes time and practice, and that's okay! Let's explore these tools that you can use to practice healthier communication.

## 1. Express Yourself with the "I statement":

Instead of saying, "You're making me upset," try saying, "I feel upset when..." This way, you share your feelings without blaming anyone.

## 3. Speak Up Early:

Share what's bothering you early to stop it from becoming a bigger problem later. Sometimes, when we keep things bottled up, we can have overwhelming emotions that can be unsafe later.

## 5. Ask Questions:

If you don't understand something, ask questions. Don't guess or assume. Asking questions helps clear up confusion and helps both of you understand each other and be heard and understood.

## 7. Check Your Feelings:

It's okay to feel upset, but taking a break is important until both of you calm down. Handling upset feelings helps keep your relationships respectful and strong.

**Interested in learning more about this topic or others?** The Kids Help Phone offers a safe and supportive space where you can freely talk about your feelings, concerns, or problems, whether they involve school issues, friendship challenges, family matters, or any other difficulties you may be facing. You can contact Kids Help Phone 24/7 via phone, chat, or email. Remember, everything is confidential, ensuring your privacy is respected.

Text **686868** or call **1-800-668-6868** or visit <https://kidshelpphone.ca/> for Kids Help Phone  
Text **647-694-4275** or visit <https://www.youthline.ca/> for LGBTyouthline  
Call **1-855-242-3310** for the Hope for Wellness Helpline (Indigenous Support Line)  
Find your local YWCA at <https://ywcacanada.ca/find-your-ywca/>

# Let's Talk About It: Conversation Starters

Things in relationships can sometimes get tricky. It's super important to talk about it and share your feelings. If something doesn't feel right, speaking up is empowering!

"The 'I Language' tool is a good way to talk about our feelings. Using 'I language,' shows us that things affect us personally. Instead of saying, 'You always do this,' we say, 'I feel this way when this happens.' This helps others understand our feelings without feeling blamed. It makes talking about emotions cool and keeps our relationship strong. Check out the scenarios below, imagine how you'd feel or what you might say in these situations.

## **Your friend always tells you what you can and can't do. What to Say:**

"I like making my own choices sometimes. It feels weird when someone always tells me what to do."

## **Your friend keeps asking for your password to your online accounts. What to Say:**

"I don't think sharing my password is right. It's my personal stuff, and I want to keep it private."

## **Your friend always tells you what to wear or how to look. What to Say:**

"I like choosing my own clothes. It's not okay for someone to always tell me what to wear."

## **Your friend borrows your things without asking and doesn't return them. What to Say:**

"I've noticed my things are missing after you've been over. It bothers me because I like to know where my stuff is. Can we talk about this?"

## **Your friend always wants to know where you are and who you're with. What to Say:**

"I appreciate that you care, but it feels overwhelming when you always ask where I am. I need some space to do my own thing sometimes."

## **Your friend shares your personal stories without asking. What to Say:**

"I like to keep some things private, and it bothers me when you share my stories without checking with me first. Can we talk about respecting each other's privacy?"

## **Someone at school is spreading rumours about you online. What to Say:**

"It hurts when people say mean things about me online. I don't know why they're doing it, and it makes me feel bad."

## **Your friend laughs and makes fun of you in front of others. What to Say:**

"It's not fun when someone makes fun of me. It makes me feel embarrassed, and I don't like it."

## **Your friend often ignores you when you're in a group. What to Say:**

"I notice sometimes you don't talk to me when we're with others. It makes me feel left out, and I'd like to understand why."

## **Your friend pressures you to do things you're uncomfortable with. What to Say:**

"I feel uneasy when you ask me to do things I'm not okay with. I want to be true to myself, and you need to respect that."

## **Your friend teases you about your appearance or hobbies. What to Say:**

"I don't like it when you joke about how I look or what I enjoy. It hurts my feelings, and I want us to be friends without making fun of each other."

## **Your friend often cancels plans with you at the last minute. What to Say:**

"It's disappointing when plans get cancelled, especially when it happens a lot. I value our time together, and I'd like to find a way to make plans that work for both of us."

Got more situations on your mind? How might you respond in those situations?

Using conversation starters is like having a weatherproof toolkit for talking! It helps navigate tricky situations, keeps relationships strong, and solves problems. It might take practice like learning anything new, and that's okay! Keep chatting, listening, and being an extraordinary communicator!

# Understanding Consent: Easy as FRIES!

Consent is a big deal in friendships and dating. It's about agreeing to things and making choices. Giving "consent" means you agree by your own choice, not because you're scared, pressured, or feel guilty. It's like saying 'yes' to touching, hugging, kissing or other sexual things. If someone doesn't give consent, like saying "no" or not answering, or if they've taken drugs or alcohol, continuing those activities is wrong and a serious crime called assault. Always remember, even if you said YES at first, you and the other person can say NO or STOP anytime you want.

## Here are some important rules for consent:

**Understanding:** When you say "yes," know what you're agreeing to. It's like understanding the whole deal.

**Freely and Happily Given:** Your "yes" should be from your heart, and you should feel cool with it. No one should make you say "yes."

**No Pressure, No Tricks:** No one should push, threaten, or play tricks to get your "yes." Your "yes" is always your choice.

**You Can Say "No" Anytime:** It's okay to change your mind. Your "no" is just as important as your "yes."

## Now, let's make it easy to remember with FRIES:

**F - Freely Given:** Just like choosing your favourite type of fries, consent is freely saying 'yes' without anyone making you do it.

**R - Reversible:** You can change your mind, just like picking a different snack. Saying 'yes' today doesn't mean 'yes' forever.

**I - Informed:** It's like knowing what's in your favourite sauce - you should understand what you're agreeing to.

**E - Enthusiastic:** Your 'yes' should be like being super excited about your favourite treat, not forced or pressured.

**S - Specific:** Consent is for one thing at a time, just like ordering a specific kind of fries.

**So, always remember, 'FRIES' is the key to having healthier and respectful relationships!**

(source: Planned Parenthood)

# Understanding Consent: Quick Glance

**Ages 12-13:** Can be in a relationship with someone up to 2 years older. For example, if you're 13, the oldest they can be is 15.

**Ages 14-15:** Can be in a "romantic" relationship with someone up to 5 years older. So, if you're 14, they can be up to 19. But these rules only work if it's fair. A teacher shouldn't date a student – that's not okay and illegal!

**Legal Consent:** If a person is under 18, they cannot legally consent to romantic relationships if the person is in a position of power or if they depend on them. That's not appropriate – it's called exploitation.

**Avoiding Abuse of Power:** Relationships shouldn't involve misuse of authority, such as a teacher dating a student.

**Exploitative (Abusive) Activities:** Engaging in certain activities such as pornography or sex work is illegal and exploitative for minors (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d.).

**Trust Your Gut:** Talk to an adult you trust if something feels wrong. Your feelings matter, and it's okay to ask for help. You deserve to feel safe and respected.

