



SEX LOVE DATING

**Be brave enough to
start a conversation
that matters.**




**We couldn't have developed this
booklet without the help of:**

Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence,
Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria,
Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast
and Griffith University Safe Campuses Taskforce.



RELATIONSHIPS

Being in a relationship or going out on a date with someone new can be one of the best experiences, but there is no denying that dating and relationships can also be daunting and challenging too, particularly when you are just starting out.



Not wanting a relationship is okay too!

Relationships come in all different shapes and sizes. They can last a night, a few months or years and years. Relationships can be serious, about falling in love, or just about hanging out and having fun. Relationships can be anything from a casual hook up to a long term, exclusive partnership.

Yes relationships can be tricky... sometimes you find yourself thinking of a million questions (am I happy? Where is this going? Should we break up?) and if you're not in a relationship you might also have a

million questions (When will I meet someone? Will dating my friend ruin the friendship? Am I the only single person left in the world? Is being single more fun?).


But the key to any relationship is to make sure that it's healthy—that both parties are happy and that they support and care for each other.

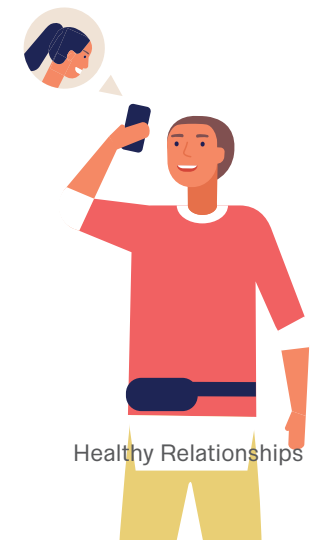
Sounds easy, right? Wrong. Getting into a relationship and making sure that it's healthy takes some serious work. And that means you're on point with communication, trust, and respect.



**Casual.
Partner.
Boyfriend.
Girlfriend.
Same sex.
Going out.
Polygamy.
Being exclusive.
One night stand.
Getting together.
Friends with benefits.**

I have the RIGHT TO...

- 
- Ask for a date and to respect when the answer is “no”
 - Refuse a date without feeling guilty
 - Suggest what we'll do on a date
 - Refuse any activities, even if my date is excited about them
 - Have my own feelings and be able to express them
 - Ask someone not to interrupt me
 - Be heard and have my feelings and thoughts acknowledged
 - Refuse to lend money
 - Set boundaries, to say “no” or “yes” as I please
 - Change my mind at any time
 - Refuse to be sexually intimate
 - Stop doing something, even once it has started
 - Refuse sex with anyone just because they took me out on an expensive date, or for any other reason, at any time
 - Have friends
 - Have space away from my partner
 - Break up when I want to
 - Ask my partner when I want more affection
 - Have the right to say “I love you” without having sex
 - Have the right to have sex without saying “I love you”
 - Talk to others about my relationships
 - Be myself without changing to suit others
 - Not act seductive, macho or sexually interested
 - Dress how I choose, even if others don't approve or like it



I have the **RESPONSIBILITY TO...**

- Respect and not violate the boundaries of others
- Determine and communicate my own boundaries and values
- Look and listen to both verbal and non-verbal communication
- Communicate as clearly and honestly as I can
- Ask for help and support when I need it
- Be considerate and respect the values of others
- Check my actions/decisions to determine if they are in my best interest
- Take care of myself



Some important characteristics of a **healthy relationship**:



Closeness

You are caring and loyal.
You trust your partner.
You share your feelings.
You support your partner during illness or during stressful times.



Respect

You use respectful language and do not act in ways that demean your partner.
You understand your partner's wishes and feelings.
You are ready to compromise—to meet your partner halfway.



Shared Experiences

You share common interests and friends/acquaintances.
You talk about your experiences and accept and respect each other's individual interests.



Affection

You show your partner you care.
You show each other affection in many ways.



Humour

You and your partner enjoy being with each other and can laugh together.



Shared Goals and Beliefs

You share beliefs and values.
You recognize and respect differences in each other.

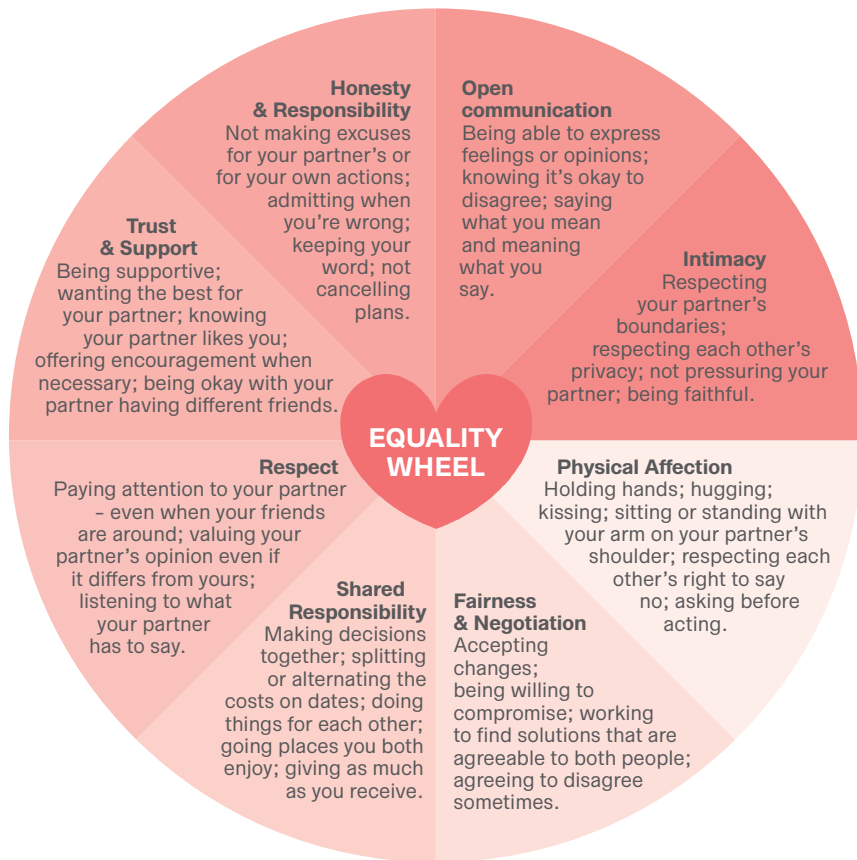


Communication

You are honest with each other.
You listen to each other.

EQUALITY IN dating relationships

A strong dating relationship is based on **EQUALITY** and **RESPECT**, not power and control. Think about how you treat - and want to be treated by - someone you care about.



In the strongest relationships, **respect** can't be beat.

Relationship RED FLAGS



- Controlling – controlling who you speak to, what you wear, how much you spend
- Guilt tripping – being made to feel guilty about engaging in activities and hobbies you enjoy
- No privacy – your phone/ emails/social media account are checked regularly
- Keeping tabs on you – Your partner knows where you've been / what you've been doing
- Cold shoulder – Ignoring you or refusing to talk
- They disrespect you – criticising you or putting you down
- Curfews – you have to be home by a time chosen by your partner
- Unwanted rough sexual activity
- Being pressured into sex
- Refusal to practice safe sex
- Your partner blames others for why their previous relationships haven't worked out
- Your partner threatens to leave you
- You find yourself justifying your partner's bad behaviour to others
- Your partner threatens to hurt themselves if you leave / breakup with them
- Your partner physically harms or threatens to kill you





Relationships are about love, not gender.

COMMUNICATION

In person, online, text... talking to someone you're interested in can be nerve racking. So remember to **keep it simple!** The best way to start is to talk to them like a mate.

- Be yourself. In the long run, if they're not into you for who you really are, the relationship won't work.
- Be confident. Don't buy into that negative mind chatter. Sometimes you just have to fake the confidence (because really, you're dying inside!) but remember the things about yourself that are interesting.
- Start with the stuff you have in common. Is there something you both like?
- Ask them questions! It's a win/win - you get to know more about who they are and you can settle your nerves while they're talking.
- It's normal to have some silences or nervous giggling. It's doesn't mean they don't like you.
- If you get the feeling they're uncomfortable, back off and think about talking to them another time.

- Know how you're going to finish the conversation.

How do you know if they're not interested in you?

- Signs that they're not interested could be if they often drift off from the conversation or if they don't listen to you, if they rarely ask you anything about yourself, or if they ignore you. If they're not really into you it's time to move on to find someone else.
- What about if you're not interested in them? Your body might feel tense and uncomfortable, you might be looking for ways to leave the conversation, you don't trust what they're saying is the truth, you feel bored, you don't want to make plans with them, and you don't feel a connection.

COMMUNICATION

Express yourself! Communicating in a relationship

- Listen! No really, listen. Set your intention to pay attention with an open mind to what the other person is saying. Avoid thinking about what you're going to say next. Take in what they're saying and pause afterwards if you need to think about how to respond.
- Be gentle. If something is bothering you, bring it up gently and try to avoid blame. A great way to do this is by using "I feel..." statements.
- Seek first to understand. Be inquisitive - Where is your partner coming from with their perspective? This can really shift the relational dynamic and pave the way for more open and fresh communication.
- Own your message. Acknowledge that your message comes from your frame of reference and your perceptions. This fosters understanding and cooperation.

- Ask for feedback. "How do you see this situation?" "What do you want to do?"



Conflicts are unavoidable, so communicate like a pro:

You never talk to me

The problem:

The criticism is directed at the person instead of the behaviour you have a problem with.

I feel left out and I want to hear about your day

You're just so lazy!

The problem:

Contempt attacks the person's sense of self-worth instead of appreciating their strengths.

I love when you help me out with cleaning

I'm not talking about this again!

The problem:

Stonewalling happens when we're overwhelmed. It might look to someone else like you don't care. Make sure you take a break and return to the conversation later.

Can we take a break and talk about it this arvo?

It's not my fault! it's your fault because -

The problem:

Defensiveness doesn't lead to resolution. Instead, accept responsibility for your own actions.

I can see how that might've been hurtful, I'm sorry

COMMUNICATION

How do we communicate without words?

- A warm smile.
 - A frown.
 - A soft tone of voice can increase closeness between you and another person.
 - Turning away might show they're not interested.
 - Eye contact (too much, too little just right!).
 - Relaxing your face, shoulders and body can make people around you also feel relaxed.
 - Nodding shows that someone is understanding where you're coming from.
 - Get to know your partner's non-verbal communication by clarifying it. If the body, tone of voice or facial expression tells you they're not okay... ask them how they feel about what you've said or what they've told you.
- But please remember when it comes to sex with someone else the absence of NO does not mean yes. Please check in regularly and do not just rely on verbal or non-verbal communication!



“Let’s talk about sex baby”

Sex can be awkward to talk about but learning what questions to ask can make the experience way better for both you and them. Just because someone is okay with kissing doesn't mean they'll be okay with anything more than that. You don't have to sit down and talk about it over dinner but these are some ways you can suss out if you're both actually ready to have sex...

- Do you want to?
- Do you feel comfortable?
- Do you like this?
- Do you want me to keep going?
- What do you like?
- What do you want to do?
- Can I touch/kiss...?

CONSENT IS...

- ✓ **A CLEAR & ENTHUSIASTIC YES!** It's about wanting to do something. Not feeling like you have to or should do something.
- ✓ Freely given. Saying "yes" without pressure or manipulation. Anyone can change their mind about what they're interested in doing, anytime.
- ✓ Informed. Not deceiving or lying. For example, if someone says they'll use a condom and they don't, there is NOT full consent.
- ✓ Specific. Saying "yes" to one act, doesn't mean you've said yes to others. Check in if you want to change things up.
- ✓ **MANDATORY.** Sex without consent is sexual assault.



LISTENING.

Can I kiss you?

RESPECT.

That feels good.

Enthusiastic.

An ongoing yes. KEEP GOING.

YES YES YES. Affirmative gestures.

I like that. SMILING.



If you want me to.

Maybe. They said "yes" last time.

LET'S SLOW DOWN. SLEEPING.

Back off. I SHOULD GO.

FROZEN. I'm not sure.

It feels weird.

No more.

Mixed signals.



COERCION.

silence

I want to but...

Taking care OF ME

How do you talk to yourself about sex so you know if you're making the right decision for you? Here are some questions that might help you with that conversation:

- Am I doing what I really want to do?
- Am I looking forward to it?
- Am I doing it because I'm frightened they'll be angry if I say no?
- I'm not doing it because it's expected of me. Am I doing something because I think it's what I have to do?
- Just because I've done something before, doesn't mean I have to do it again.
- Do I feel able to talk about using condoms and/or contraception?
- Am I sober? Are they sober?
- Do we have a safe place to be with each other?
- Do I know what the other person wants?



To effectively communicate, we must realise that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.

THE ONLINE WORLD

Porn: what unhelpful things are we learning from it?

- Everyone should look like a porn actor- meaning that we're becoming more self-conscious about our **NORMAL** bodies.
 - Violence is a turn on. Porn makes physical violence and verbal aggression look sexy and a normal part of sex.
 - Nothing bad comes from risky sex. Porn doesn't show skin tearing, bruising, unwanted pregnancy, STIs etc.
 - Sex is all about pleasure. Porn doesn't show an emotional connection or talking about what's okay for each partner sexually... or even the awkward fumbling!
 - Watching porn can relieve stress. Using porn as a stress relief can actually lead to porn addiction and takes away from healthier ways to relieve stress.
- Men are dominant and women are submissive. Porn just reinforces gender stereotypes that we're not okay with.

Porn can lead to less satisfaction in relationships.



Sexting ground rules

Once you hit send on a photo or text, you lose control over who sees it.

The ground rules:

1. Sexting needs consent too! Don't just surprise someone. Ask them if they're okay with it before sending a pic.
2. If you really want to send something you could crop your face out and hide any identifying features (like a birthmark or tattoo).
3. Delete the photos straight away or put them in a vault app so they aren't easily accessible. No one wants to accidentally stumble across those in your holiday snaps.
4. Stay away from your phone when you're drunk. This will help you avoid waking up with regret from embarrassing texts or photos.



Know where you stand legally

If you're **under 18 you can't consent to sexting** and any photo you take and/or send is classed as child pornography. Receiving and/or saving a photo of someone under 18 is also illegal.

THE ONLINE WORLD

What's not okay online

- **INTIMIDATION** - sending threatening messages.
- **SEXUAL VIOLENCE** - pressuring someone to send explicit pics or videos. Sharing explicit images without the person's consent is a crime.
- **CYBER STALKING** - checking their account without permission or tracking someone using GPS location without their permission.
- **STEALING ONLINE IDENTITY** - logging into someone's account and pretending to be them.
- **CONTROLLING** - demanding they delete certain friends. Trying to befriend their friends online to keep tabs on them.
- **EMOTIONAL & VERBAL ABUSE** - spreading rumours online. Using put downs over text.



Online dating

We're all doing it but here are five things we're not doing that we REALLY should be:

1. Ensure your meeting spot is somewhere you're familiar with. It would also be great if you could share your location with a friend before your date.
2. Age! Be mindful that people may not always tell you the truth about their age.
3. Did you know there are apps that help to weed out catfish? Apps such as 'Tin Eye' can search the web to see where else a photo shows up. If it's linked to other names, you've probably caught a catfish.
4. A quick search online can keep you safe. Check out their other social media profiles for any red flags. Make sure they are who they're telling you they are.
5. Not going well? Leave. Make your excuses if that feels more comfortable. Don't feel bad about cutting a date short if you're not keen. You don't owe the other person anything, no matter how long you've been chatting or what's been suggested.



THE ONLINE WORLD

So much of our culture here in Australia is about having each other's back. Learn some key ways to keep your friends safe while having fun.

Watch their drink.

Make sure no one leaves a drink unattended. Make sure no one adds something to the communal punch without you knowing. We're talking about drink spiking!

Deso.

Have a designated person each night who won't go as hard as everyone else on the drinks. This might entail the following duties: keeping track of time, watching the crowd doesn't get dodgy, passing the waters around, holding your friend's hair back while they throw up, and making sure everyone gets home safe at the end of the night.

Buddy Up!

Buddy up with a friend for the night. This person will be your dance floor partner, bathroom buddy, after party traveller and all round safety watch. You won't let each other get into any trouble.



You do you.

If someone is making you or a friend feel uncomfortable... ask them to leave or just turn away and walk. Don't feel like you have to be polite, you're not obligated to talk to them.

Intervene.

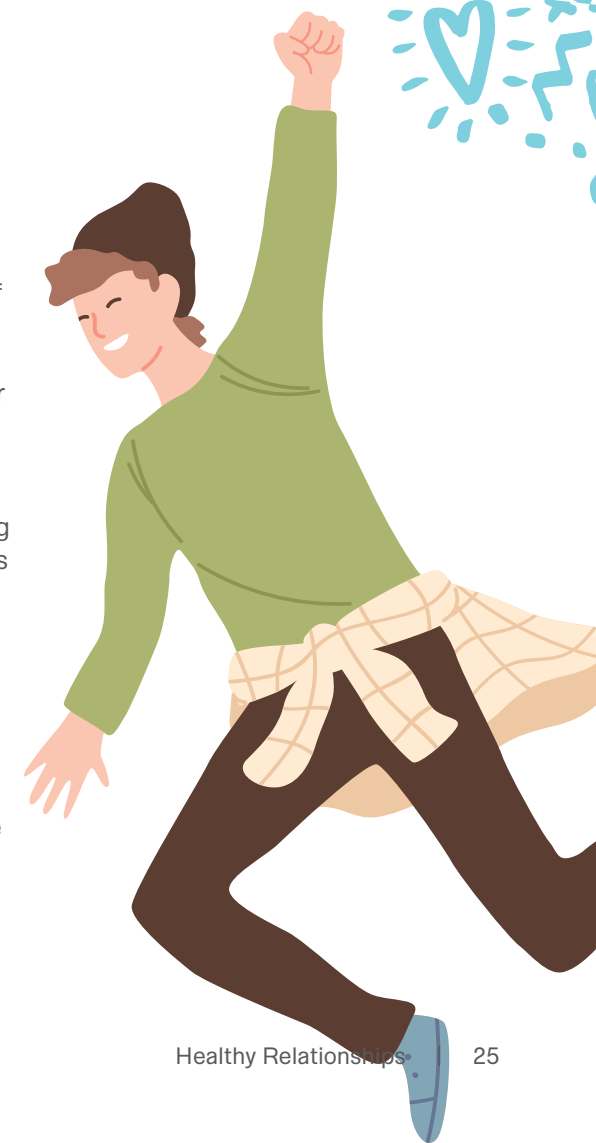
If someone is in an unsafe position (even if it isn't one of your close friends) help them out - Especially if they don't look sober enough to be making decisions for themselves. Ask directly if they need your help or if you can do anything for them.

Feed me.

Make sure your mates eat something before they go out drinking. It makes the night last longer and overall it will be more enjoyable for everyone. And - once you are done go grab that pizza or kebab!

Home time!

Make sure everyone is accounted for at the end of the night. Everyone should have a trusted way to get home and if not... they're coming with you! If catching a Taxi or Uber home alone share your location with a friend or text someone when you are home safely.



SUPPORT

Why might someone stay in an unhealthy relationship?

- Emotional abuse destroys self-esteem. Leaving is hard when you have continuously been made to feel worthless and like there's no better option.
- Abusive partners apologise and promise to change. When you love someone, you want the violence to stop, not for the relationship to end. Never stay in a relationship in which you count on someone to change their behaviour for the better.
- You may feel social pressure to “ride it out” and not give up. A good friend or partner would never endanger or hurt you.
- It can be very dangerous to leave. Women are more likely to be killed in the weeks after leaving their abusive partner than any other time during the relationship.
- Society can normalise unhealthy behaviour, so you may not understand that your relationship is abusive. Therefore you don't seek help.
- If you live with an abusive partner you may feel helpless, like you have nowhere to go.



SUPPORT



What can you do if your friend is going through a tough time?

When you suspect a friend is, or might be, experiencing abuse, it can be challenging to figure out how to offer support in an effective way. What should you say? When should you say it? Every relationship and person is unique, but there are some things you can keep in mind.

- Take any of their fears seriously and believe them.
- Listen! Please don't interrupt them or start telling your own story (it's not the time for that).
- Support them, even if you might not agree with what they decide to do.
- Ask them what they want to do next or what they might need you to do.



Love doesn't hurt.

CONTACTS

What support is available?

If in immediate danger always call **Police (000)** or if on campus you can also call the **Campus Support Team (1800 800 707)**

**Griffith University
Counselling and Wellbeing**
Counselling appointments and information:
Gold Coast: (07) 5552 8734
Brisbane: (07) 3735 7470

General health, sexual health and family planning:
Gold Coast: (07) 5552 8734
Brisbane: (07) 3735 7299

Priority personal violence counselling appointments:
(07) 5552 9600 or
counsellor@griffith.edu.au

Griffith Mental Wellbeing Support Line
Call: 1300 785 442 or
Text: 0488 884 146
5.00pm – 9.00am weekdays & 24 hours at weekends and public holidays.

Safe Campuses
griffith.edu.au/safe-campuses

1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)
www.1800RESPECT.org.au

1800 RESPECT is Australia's National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling service. It provides free, confidential telephone and online counselling and information. Counsellors will listen to you, answer questions and can refer you to other support services in your local area.

