

# Healthy Relationships: Tips for Parents

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ending violence against women

**ROOTS OF  
EQUALITY**



As parents, ***we can be our children's best teacher*** and role model.

We can help our children ***build healthy friendships***, and dating relationships without violence.

We can make a ***big difference*** in our children's lives that will ***last a lifetime***.

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### **What Can I do?**

- **Get Informed**

Talk to your kids about relationships. Learn what makes a healthy, equal relationship.

Teach your children everyone deserves to be in a good relationship with no violence.

We all should be able to give and receive respect, trust, and friendship

## When Do I Start?



- **It's never too early**

Help your son or daughter understand about healthy relationships when they are young.

Start as early as possible.

Explain that girls and boys are equally valuable and important.

Tell them it's okay for men to be sensitive, and for women to be independent.

Give them chores based on their age and maturity, not on the gender of the child.



## Where Do We Discuss This?

- **Create the space**

Provide a comfortable and safe place for your son or daughter to talk about friendship or relationship issues.

Make time to listen to them.

Give them answers when they ask you questions or share their thoughts.

Giving them your attention lets them know what they are saying is important to you.

Discuss issues with them; don't just give them a lecture.

Listen patiently, and let them come up with their own conclusions, even if they say or do something you don't like.

Show them that you trust them and believe them.

## How often?



- **Keep talking**

The more we talk about healthy, equal relationships, the more comfortable our children will be talking to us.

Talk about what you hear or see on TV, the internet, and in movies. Children may be learning harmful ideas that lead to unhealthy, unequal, and sometimes \*abusive relationships.

Ask them to think of examples of healthy and unhealthy relationships they have seen.

## What Else Can I do?

- **Take an interest**



Watch their favourite TV shows with them.

Listen to your kids' music or check out the lyrics online.

Look at some websites and play their video games with them.

Get to know what your children are doing on the internet.

You can go on the internet with your child and make it a fun way to spend time together.

Ask them to tell you if they feel uncomfortable, scared, or confused when using the internet.

Encourage your children to spend time with their friends in your home.

Treat their friends with respect and try to get to know their parents.



- **Show them**

Be a good example for your children on how to have a healthy, equal relationship.

Resolve any disagreements by discussing without yelling, blaming or name calling.

When you solve problems with them, or with your partner, listen carefully and respectfully.

They will follow your example.



- **Think Ahead**

It is important for our children to know how to deal with difficult situations before they happen.

Teach them to be confident so they can make decisions without being influenced by their friends.

How will your child act if friends encourage him or her to be controlling and disrespectful to others?

What will your child do if they are being pressured to have sex?

Think up some situations that could happen to them. Then, talk with your son or daughter about how they would handle each situation.

Your children will gain practical experience and confidence in themselves.

## **What Should I Look For?**



- **Pay attention**

Look for warning signs that show your child might be in an unhealthy relationship.

Remember that children from any family background may experience abuse in their relationships. This can happen to anyone.

Children can be targets of abuse because of their sex, race, religion, culture, abilities, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, country of origin, or economic status.

Get to know who your child or teen is dating.

Pay attention to the interaction between your child or teen and their girlfriend or boyfriend.

Watch for controlling behaviour, criticism, and jealousy.

Some girls in an unhealthy relationship become anxious or depressed.

They may stop doing the things they love.

Some boys who are in an unhealthy relationship may get angry easily, or become moody or unpredictable.

## How Do I Handle It?

- **Know what to do**

Ask how they feel about their relationship.

Listen. Don't judge.

Be careful not to criticize the friend, so your child won't feel the need to defend him or her.

Let your child know you support them.

If you think your child may be in an unhealthy relationship, don't be afraid to talk to them about it.

Tell them what your concerns are.

If they are not comfortable talking to you, help them find another trusted adult to talk to.



**Give them information and resources such as confidential counselling at:**

**Kids Help Phone : 1-800-668-6868**

[www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

**To find out more about healthy relationships and violence against women and girls, go to:**

**Springtide Resources: 416-968-3422**

[www.springtideresources.org](http://www.springtideresources.org)

**Ontario Women's Directorate:**

[www.ontariowomensdirectorate.gov.on.ca](http://www.ontariowomensdirectorate.gov.on.ca)



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