



NAVIGATING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ONLINE



Healthy relationships, online or in-person, are built on trust and respect.

Relationships can look different, from casual connections to committed partnerships, but the same expectations of safety, respect, and consent apply to all of them. **Consent** should always be:

Clear – you know what’s happening and each other’s boundaries are acknowledged

Enthusiastic – you genuinely and willingly want to participate, without pressure or hesitation

Informed – you understand what you are agreeing to

Ongoing – you can change your mind at any time

Women, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities often face higher rates of sexual harassment and disregard for boundaries online, not because of personal behaviours, but because of harmful stereotypes and unequal power dynamics.

Identifying Healthy vs. Unhealthy Online Relationship Behaviours

The table below highlights healthy and unhealthy behaviours in online relationships. It’s essential to feel safe saying ‘no’ and to communicate openly about boundaries. Remember: once something is sent online, you may not be able to control where it ends up.

HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS	UNHEALTHY BEHAVIOURS
Setting expectations for when you’ll be in touch and allowing time to disconnect.	Pressuring someone to always be available online, repeatedly messaging or calling.
Sharing messages or images only with permission.	Posting online or sharing without consent.
Openly discussing when something online makes you uncomfortable.	Belittling or refusing to hear your concerns.
Acknowledging power dynamics and respecting boundaries.	Using military rank or status to pressure someone into doing something they’re uncomfortable with.
Encouraging each other’s independence and self-care.	Constantly asking for explanations about your whereabouts.
Discussing expectations around intimate messages or images.	Pressuring someone into intimate conversations or sending images without consent.
Taking steps to protect your privacy, such as avoiding photos with identifiable features (face, tattoos, name, location, military unit).	Sharing or threatening to share intimate images or messages.
Recognizing when it’s appropriate to discuss and share financial information as trust develops.	Asking for your banking details or personal financial information when it doesn’t make sense.

For more information about online sexual violence, check out our Supporting Youth Affected by Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence tip sheet. For more information about economic and financial abuse, check out our Managing Finances as a Couple and Exploring Economic Abuse: Recognizing Signs and Resources Available tip sheets.

Accessing Support and Resources

Remember assistance is available to you 24/7 through the Family Information Line (FIL). This support is bilingual, free, and confidential:

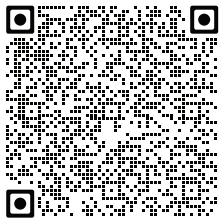
North America: 1-800-866-4546

International: 00-800-771-17722

Email: FIL-LIF@cfmws.com

If you're in immediate danger or fear for your safety or that of others around you, please contact local authorities. For support in your area, you can look for crisis lines and local services via the Family Information Line, your local Military Family Resource Center (MFRC), or Military Family Services (MFS) service provider.

LEARN MORE.



Created in partnership with WomanACT, a charitable organization working collaboratively to end gender-based violence and advance gender equity through research, education, and advocacy.