Boundaries and Healthy Relationships

Module 2 explores what qualities contribute to safe and healthy relationships. You’ll consider how to communicate your needs and boundaries in a relationship and how to listen when someone expresses theirs in turn.

After completing this module, you will be able to:

* Reflect on what constitutes safe and healthy relationships
* Explore how to engage in conversations about safe and healthy relationships.

# **[slide 1]** Welcome to Module 2!

In this module, you will explore the qualities you need to have safe and healthy relationships. You will be expected to reflect on your understanding of what constitutes safe and healthy relationships.

# **[slide 2]** A quick note

Throughout this module, there are reflection questions about the ways in which you share and establish boundaries. There are no right or wrong answers. You are encouraged to respond to them from your own experiences.

# **[slide 3]** Video

[Module 2: Boundaries and Healthy Relationships](https://media.bccampus.ca/media/Module+2A+Boundaries+and+Healthy+Relationships/0_9zkewqa6)

**[person 1]**

We grow up seeing those around us and in the media taking part in relationships in very different ways, and this definitely shapes our idea of what we think relationships should look like. This is where we learn communication styles, different ways of supporting one another, and even how much to rely on and trust in a partner or partners!

**[person 2]**

That’s so true! We really do all have different expectations when it comes to our relationships, whether with a roommate or colleague, a friend, sexual or non-sexual partner or partners, significant other or a parent. But one thing must remain constant, and that is that we all deserve safe and healthy relationships.

**[person 1]**

I find it so interesting that you use the words “safety” and “healthy” with “relationships.” We all have a right to feel safe and supported and to have relationships that fuel us instead of draining our energy or making us feel unhappy and unwell.

It’s really important for us to define what a safe and healthy relationship looks like for ourselves, because it can help us understand how and why we set certain boundaries.

**[person 2]**

And we all have different needs! It's important to have ongoing conversations with people in our lives about how we feel.

For example, I had that conversation with my partner when we were spending so much time together that I wasn’t able to spend as much time with my friends and family as I would have liked. Although I was nervous about bringing it up at first, the conversation went well. Together we decided that I’d need at least 3 days a week to dedicate to my family, friends, and to have time for myself. We also both wanted to make sure days together were interesting and exciting, and came up with some new, fun things to do together.

**[person 1]**

That’s so good to hear! I’m glad you were able to have that conversation with your partner. It really shows that healthy relationships are built on a foundation of respect. We are bound to have disagreements in our relationships, because we all have differences of opinion and were raised in different circumstances. But we must be open to hearing the needs of our partner or partners, finding ways to meet them where they are, and not rushing or pressuring them into doing things they’re not comfortable with.

**[person 2]**

You’re so right. Having conversations and making sure that we are expressing and sharing our needs and feelings, as well as listening to our partners’ needs and feelings will help us strengthen our current relationships and build new ones.

# **[slide 4]** Question 1

Here are five questions to help guide you in reflecting on safe and healthy relationships and how to communicate your needs and boundaries.

1. Which qualities do you value most for building and maintaining a safe and healthy relationship?
   * Communication
   * Support
   * Trust
   * Independence
   * Accountability

# **[slide 5]** Question 1: Feedback

Having safe and healthy relationships, whether with colleagues, friends, and family members or in romantic or sexual relationships, is essential for anyone’s well-being. It’s important to be self-aware and reflect on what you value most. While your partner may value different qualities than you do, together you can find ways to compromise while still respecting each other’s boundaries.

# **[slide 6]** Question 2

1. What actions let you know that someone cares about you?
   * They make time to spend with you
   * They show an interest in your life, including your work, hobbies, friends, and so on
   * They tell you how much they value and appreciate you
   * They emotionally validate your experiences
   * They help you with various tasks, such as doing the dishes, without being asked
   * They surprise you with little gifts and notes
   * They show their affection for you, giving you hugs and holding hands

# **[slide 7]** Question 2: Feedback

We can show people that we care about them in many different ways. When someone shows their affection for us in ways that are different from the ways we show affection ourselves, we might not always pick up on what they are telling us. By knowing a person’s preferred ways of receiving affection, we are able to show how much we care about them.

# **[slide 8]** Question 3

1. What would you consider to be unhealthy behaviours in a relationship?

* Demanding to know where you are at all times
* Getting frustrated when you miss responding to all their messages or phone calls
* Getting upset when you hang out with your friends without them
* Controlling or undermining/disregarding your decisions, actions, and/or emotions
* Insisting that you spend all of your time with them
* Pressuring you to do things you’re not comfortable with

# **[slide 9]** Question 3: Feedback

Behaviours through which another person attempts to monitor and control your emotions or actions are not healthy. Relationships can make space for every person to thrive as individuals and be supported by one another at the same time.

**Remember:** If your partner has crossed a line in a way that makes you feel unsafe, you can seek support through your friends, family, mentors, and others, or through campus or community resources.

# **[slide 10]** Question 4

1. Who do you go to when you need support or advice?
   * Friends
   * Family
   * Partner(s)
   * Colleagues
   * Counsellor
   * Advisor
   * Instructor

# **[slide 11]** Question 4: Feedback

Building and maintaining a support system takes time, and everyone’s system will look different. Having different types of relationships allows us to seek information, advice, and guidance on many different kinds of issues, whether emotional, practical, professional, or otherwise.

# **[slide 12]** Question 5

**Consider the Following**

For the next question, you might want to use a journal or notepad to capture your ideas and reflections.

1. Despite discussing your boundaries in advance, your partner has crossed a line and made you feel uncomfortable. How do you proceed?

*Remember, only you will be able to see what you write. However, the text won’t be saved unless you copy it into another document (for example, a Word file) or save a screenshot. Use the arrows at the bottom to advance to the next slide.*

# **[slide 13]** Question 5: Feedback

Discussing our boundaries is not always easy. And when we’ve already had that conversation and our partner has still crossed a line, making us feel uncomfortable, it can be harder still.

It’s important to identify your choices:

* You might decide to have another conversation with them and tell them that they crossed a line and made you feel uncomfortable
* You might decide to take some time away from your partner
* Or you might decide that leaving the relationship is what’s best for you

Be realistic about what you can and can’t do. If you don’t feel safe discussing this with your partner, reach out to your support system. And most importantly, take care of yourself.

# **[slide 14]** Takeaways from Module 2

In learning about healthy and safe relationships we must continue engaging in opportunities to expand our knowledge. When we learn more about these topics, we are working toward creating safer communities for all. Here are a few things to take away from this module:

1. Defining for ourselves what a safe and healthy relationship looks like, whether with a roommate or colleague, a friend, sexual or non-sexual partner(s), significant other or a parent, can help us understand how and why we set certain boundaries.
2. To build and maintain healthy relationships, it’s important to have ongoing conversations about our boundaries and expectations.

# Citation

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