Healthy Relationships For College Students

Ellianna Crumley

Agenda

1. Introduction to Healthy Relationships
2. Understanding Personal Boundaries
3. Recognizing Unhealthy Relationship Dynamics
4. Putting Knowledge into Practice
5. Advocacy and Townhall II
6. Questions

Objectives

1

Recognize healthy relationships through mutual respect, trust, communication, and emotional safety.

2

Understand how personal boundaries support emotional well-being, autonomy, and healthy relationships.

3

Identify unhealthy relationship dynamics, including controlling, manipulative, and disrespectful behaviors.

Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship

- Mutual Respect
- Trust
- Open Communication
- Emotional Safety
- Healthy Boundaries
- Honesty
- Equality
- Support & Encouragement
- Compromise
- Accountability
- Independence
- Consent

Mutual Respect, Trust, and Communication

Mutual Respect

Valuing	Respecting	Treating
Valuing each other's feelings, opinions, and differences.	Respecting personal boundaries and individual choices.	Treating each other with kindness, even during disagreements.

Trust

Being honest and reliable.

Respecting each other’s privacy and independence.

Feeling secure without fear of constant suspicion, monitoring, or control.

Communication

- Expressing feelings, needs, and concerns openly and respectfully.
- Listening to understand rather than responding or arguing.
- Working through disagreements without insults, threats, or manipulation.

Emotional Safety & Support

Emotional Safety

- Feeling comfortable expressing thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment, humiliation, or retaliation.
- Being able to disagree or say “no” without fear of punishment or rejection.
- Feeling accepted and respected for who you are.
- Trusting that personal feelings and vulnerabilities will be treated with care.

Support

- Listening and showing empathy when the other person is struggling.
- Offering encouragement during difficult times and celebrating each other's successes.
- Validating each other's feelings, even when perspectives differ.
- Supporting each other's personal growth and independence.

What Personal Boundaries Are & Why They Matter

What Are Personal Boundaries

- Personal boundaries are limits we set to protect our comfort, needs, values, and well-being.
- They help communicate what we are comfortable with and what we are not.
- Boundaries can be physical, emotional, digital, or related to time and personal space.
- Everyone has the right to establish boundaries, and those boundaries may differ from person to person.

Why Do Boundaries Matter

- Protect Emotional Well-Being: Help reduce stress and protect mental and emotional health.
- Promote Independence: Allow individuals to make their own choices and maintain their identity.
- Build Healthy Relationships: Encourage mutual respect, trust, and honest communication.
- Prevent Unhealthy Dynamics: Help identify when someone is pressuring, controlling, or disrespecting you.
- Encourage Self-Respect: Reinforce your feelings, needs, and comfort matter.

How Boundaries Support Emotional Well-Being & Autonomy

Emotional Well-Being

Help	Allow	Protect	Encourage
Help reduce stress, frustration, and emotional exhaustion.	Allow individuals to feel safe, expressing their needs and feelings.	Protect against pressure, manipulation, and emotional harm.	Encourage healthier ways to manage conflicts and emotions.

Personal Autonomy

- Support the right to make decisions about your own life and body.
- Allow individuals to maintain their own values, interests, and friendships.
- Help people feel confident saying “no” without guilt or pressure.
- Reinforce that everyone has control over their own choices and personal limits.

In Relationships

1

Encourage both people to communicate their needs openly.

2

Help prevent one person from controlling the other.

3

Build mutual respect by recognizing that each person has different needs and comfort levels.

Communicating & Respecting Boundaries

Communicating Boundaries

- Be clear and direct: Express what you are comfortable with and what you are not.
- Use “I” statements: Focus on your own needs and feelings. For example, “I need some time to myself after work.”
- Be consistent: Reinforce your limits, when necessary, without feeling obligated to overexplain.
- Recognize your right to say no: You do not have to agree to something that makes you uncomfortable.
- Communicate calmly: When possible, express boundaries respectfully and clearly.

Respecting Others' Boundaries

- **Listen without arguing**: Take others’ limits seriously, even when you disagree.
- **Accept “no”**: Do not pressure, guilt, or manipulate someone into changing their answer.
- **Ask for consent:** Check before engaging in physical contact or other interactions that require permission.
- **Respect privacy**: Avoid checking someone's phone, messages, or personal belongings without permission.
- **Recognize that boundaries may differ**: What feels comfortable to one person may not feel comfortable to another.

Examples of Healthy Boundary Statements

- “I'm not comfortable talking about that.”
- “I need some time alone right now.”
- “Please ask before borrowing my belongings.”
- “I care about you, but I can't be available all the time.”

Identifying Controlling, Manipulative, & Disrespectful Behaviors

Controlling Behaviors

- Trying to control who someone spends time with or where they go.
- Monitoring someone's phone, location, or social media without permission.
- Telling someone what to wear or how to behave.
- Making decisions for someone without considering their wants or needs.
- Isolating someone from friends, family, or other support systems.

Manipulative Behaviors

- Using guilt, fear, or threats to get what they want.
- Making someone feel responsible for another person's emotions or actions.
- Denying or twisting events to make someone question their own experiences (gaslighting).
- Giving silent treatment to punish or control someone.
- Threatening to end a relationship or hurting themselves to influence someone's choices.

Disrespectful Behaviors

- Ignoring or repeatedly crossing personal boundaries.
- Belittling, insulting, or humiliating someone.
- Dismissing someone's feelings or opinions.
- Pressuring someone after they have said no.
- Blaming others instead of taking responsibility for harmful actions.

Warning Signs to Recognize

- Feeling afraid to speak honestly or disagree.
- Constantly changing your behavior to avoid upsetting someone.
- Feeling guilty for spending time with others or making independent decisions.
- Having your boundaries repeatedly ignored.
- Feeling pressured to do things you are uncomfortable with.

Recognizing Warning Signs in Relationships

Common Warning Signs

- Jealousy and Possessiveness
- Isolation
- Lack of Respect
- Controlling Behaviors
- Manipulation
- Disregarding Consent
- Blaming and Avoiding Responsibility
- Intimidation
- Extreme Ups and Downs

How Warning Signs Make Someone Feel

- Anxious about upsetting the other person.
- Guilty for setting boundaries or saying no.
- Afraid to express opinions or feelings.
- Isolated from friends, family, or support systems.
- Responsible for managing the other person's emotions or behavior.

Understanding the Difference Between Healthy Conflict & Unhealthy Behavior

Healthy Conflict

- **Respectful Communication**: Both people can share their opinions without insults or threats.
- **Active Listening**: Each person makes an effort to understand the other's perspective.
- **Compromise**: Both people work toward a solution that considers each person's needs.
- **Accountability**: Each person can acknowledge mistakes, apologize, and work toward change.
- **Respecting Boundaries**: Either person can ask for space or say no without fear of punishment.

Unhealthy Behavior

- **Verbal Aggression**: Insulting, humiliating, or threatening the other person.
- **Manipulation**: Using guilt, fear, or blame to get one's way.
- **Control**: Making decisions for the other person or restricting their independence.
- **Boundary Violations:** Ignoring a person's limits or pressuring them after they say no.
- **Avoiding Accountability**: Blaming the other person or refusing to acknowledge harmful behavior.
- **Intimidation**: Using physical aggression, threats, or fear to end a disagreement.

Key Differences

Healthy Conflict

- Focuses on solving a problem
- Allows both people to speak
- Respects personal boundaries
- Encourages accountability
- Allows disagreement without fear

Unhealthy Behavior

- Focuses on winning or gaining control
- Silences or dismisses one person
- Ignores or punishes boundaries
- Uses blame or manipulation
- Creates fear of consequences for disagreeing

Identifying Healthy & Unhealthy Relationship Behaviors

Healthy Relationship Behaviors

- **Respect**: Valuing each other's feelings, opinions, and boundaries.
- **Trust**: Being honest and allowing each other privacy and independence.
- **Communication**: Expressing feelings and concerns openly without fear.
- **Support**: Encouraging each other's goals, friendships, and personal growth.
- **Accountability**: Taking responsibility for mistakes and making an effort to change.
- **Consent**: Respecting each other's choices and accepting “no” without pressure.

Unhealthy Relationship Behaviors

- **Control**: Dictating what someone wears, who they see, or how they spend their time.
- **Manipulation**: Using guilt, threats, or emotional pressure to get one's way.
- **Disrespect**: Insulting, belittling, or dismissing someone's feelings.
- **Boundary Violations**: Ignoring someone's limits or pressuring them after they say no.
- **Isolation**: Discouraging or preventing contact with friends and family.
- **Blame-Shifting**: Refusing to take responsibility and making someone else feel at fault for harmful behavior.

Explore Ways to Communicate Needs & Maintain Personal Boundaries

Communicate Clearly and Respectfully

- Expresses your feelings, needs, and limits directly.
- Use “I” statements to explain how a situation affects you.
- Avoid assuming others know what you need; communicate openly.
- Example: “I feel overwhelmed when I have too many things going on. I need some time to myself.”

Learn to Say No

- Recognize that you have the right to decline requests that make you uncomfortable.
- Remember that you do not need to justify every decision.
- Stand firmly in your decision when someone pressures you to change your mind.

Example: “I'm not comfortable with that, and I don't want to do it.”

Be Consistent with Your Boundaries

- Reinforce your limits when they are repeatedly challenged.
- Follow through with actions that protect your well-being.
- Remember that setting boundaries may feel uncomfortable at first, and that is okay.

Example: “I've already explained that I'm not comfortable discussing this. If it continues, I'm going to step away from the conversation.”

Respect Other People's Boundaries

- Listen when someone expresses discomfort or says no.
- Avoid using guilt, pressure, or manipulation to change their decision.
- Understand that other people have different needs and comfort levels.

Example: “I understand. I'll respect your decision.”

Recognize When to Step Away

- Take a break when conversations become overwhelming or disrespectful.
- Avoid continuing arguments when emotions are escalating.
- Seek support if someone repeatedly ignores your boundaries or makes you feel unsafe.

Example: “I want to work through this, but I need a break. We can talk when we're both calmer.”

Strategies for Responding to Unhealthy Relationship Dynamics

Recognize and Acknowledge Warning Signs

- Identify patterns of controlling, manipulative, or disrespectful behavior.
- Pay attention to how the relationship affects your emotional well-being.
- Remind yourself that you deserve to feel safe, valued, and respected.

Communicate Your Needs and Boundaries

- Express your feelings and limits clearly when it is safe to do so.
- Use “I” statements to explain your needs.
- Remember that you do not have to justify your boundaries or convince someone to respect them.

Example: “I feel uncomfortable when you check my phone. I need my privacy to be respected.”

Recognize What You Can and Cannot Control

- Understand that you cannot force someone to change their behavior.
- Focus on your own choices, boundaries, and responses.
- Avoid taking responsibility for another person's harmful actions.

Seek Support

- Talk with a trusted friend, family member, counselor, or advocate.
- Stay connected to supportive people rather than becoming isolated.
- Ask for help when you feel overwhelmed, unsafe, or unsure what to do.

Create a Plan for Safety

- Consider what steps you can take if a situation becomes threatening or unsafe.
- Identify trusted people and safe places you can turn to.
- If someone is controlling or abusive, seek guidance from a trained professional before confronting them or making changes that could increase risk.

Evaluate the Relationship

- Consider whether the other person acknowledges their behavior and makes meaningful changes.
- Recognize that apologies without changed behavior may indicate an ongoing pattern.
- Remember that you have the right to distance yourself from a relationship that harms your well-being.

Victim of Crime Advocacy Resources

What is a Crime Victim Advocate?

- A crime victim advocate is an individual specialized in providing resources, information, support, and options to survivors of crimes.

What does an advocate do?

- A crime victim advocate can be a great source of information on next steps and other options in the justice system. As advocates we can accompany survivors of crime to forensic exams at the hospital, while talking with the police, to help assist when filing a protection order, or be there to emotionally process.

How to Contact an Advocate

- Advocates at Townhall II are available 24/7 with an hour in person response time. We can be contacted through our crisis hotline at 988 or 330-678-4357. Just call in and request to speak with an advocate.

- Talking with an advocate is free and confidential and available to community members and NEO Med students and staff.

- Advocates cannot provide legal advice. But they can provide resources to obtain legal services/advice.

Townhall II's 24/7 Crisis Helpline (330-678-4357) & 988

- Crisis Intervention Specialists on the Helpline are available to talk with you, process emotions, and give referrals 24/7/365 over the phone.
- The Helpline is available for walk-in services too!
- Walk-In Hours: Monday – Thursday 8am-5pm & Friday 8am-3pm
- The Helpline is the number you should call to be connected with a victim of crime advocate!
- Townhall II is also the call center for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in Portage County and the Rape Crisis Center.

- Dialing 988 will connect you with one of our call specialists where we can talk to you about your crisis.
- 988 does have a chat or text option. Chat is available through their website: 988lifeline.org. Text is available by texting the number: 988.
- 988 and the Townhall II Helpline are resources you can share with friends, classmates, family, etc.
- If you know someone who is having suicidal thoughts, please encourage them to reach out to 988 any time.

Thank You!