

Counseling and Mental Health Center

Dating and Relationship Violence

How do I know if my relationship is healthy or unhealthy?

Voices Against Violence (VAV) defines a healthy relationship as one in which all partners feel safe to be themselves. An unhealthy or abusive relationship is one in which one partner has established power and control through a wide spectrum of disempowering strategies. However, there are often warning signs or red flags before an escalation of control or violence in a relationship. These red flags may be a one-time incident or a pattern of behavior over time. What matters most is your gut instinct about whether or not someone might be exhibiting warning signs.

If you or someone you know is concerned about safety in a relationship, you may want to consult with a VAV advocate to talk about your options, including safety planning. All VAV appointments in the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) are private and confidential. For more information, please visit cmhc.utexas.edu/vav or call CMHC to make an appointment at **512-471-3515**. We are located on the 5th floor of the Student Services Building (SSB), 100 West Dean Keeton Street.

Red Flags and Warning Signs

Quick Involvement

- Demanding that a relationship be considered “serious” before both partners are ready
- Claiming “love” very quickly
- Moving in together quickly
- Expressing desperate need for partner
- Use of language like “forever” “always” “couldn’t live without you” “if I can’t have you, no one else can”

Unrealistic Expectations

- Being dependent upon partner for own needs
- Expecting partner to be perfect
- Expecting partner to pay for things including going out, rent etc.
- Expecting partner to use drugs and alcohol when not wanted
- Expecting partner to lie on their behalf
- Expecting partner to fit the mold of gender-based stereotypes (i.e. a masculine man or a feminine woman)

Controlling Behavior

- Expecting partner to be obedient
- Not letting partner make decisions or disregarding partner’s decisions
- Claiming concern for partner’s safety as an excuse to limit mobility/physical freedom
- Getting angry when partner is late, unprepared, or otherwise does not meet abuser’s expectation
- Taking control of money or other assets (financial abuse)

Blame

- Claiming that others are always doing wrong to him/her/hir.
- Blaming almost anything that goes wrong on the partner.
- “I wouldn’t be like this if you would stop being so stupid.”
- “I can’t help being angry.”
- “I wouldn’t have gotten so out of control if you hadn’t upset me.”

Isolation

- Working to cut partner off from resources & friends
- Playing mind games by saying things like, “We only fight after you talk to your parents” or “You’re only unhappy with our relationship after you’ve been hanging out with your friends.”
- Making demeaning remarks about friends, or about the way partner acts around friends
- Belittling or insulting partner’s supportive family and friends, either to their faces or privately to partner
- Controlling partner’s access to phone, internet, or transportation
- Limiting partner’s professional, academic, or social activities (i.e. forcing partner to quit job/school, not allowing partner to leave home without permission)

Breaking or Striking Objects




- Breaking partner’s possessions or own possessions that partner cares about, such as gifts
- Striking tables, walls, furniture to show physical strength and intimidate partner
- Throwing objects at or near partner

Any Use of Force or Threats of Force

- Holding partner down
- Physically restraining partner
- Pushing or shoving partner
- Keeping partner in one room against their will
- Threatening to use force

More information about VAV issues and prevention can be found at cmhc.utexas.edu/vav

Questions, Comments or Requests? E-mail us at voicesagainstviolence@austin.utexas.edu

   @UTAustinVAV

Together we can build a safer campus



VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE

UT COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH CENTER