1. All relationships require work, sharing, and communication. They are not fairy tales like you might see on TV or in movies.

2. In a healthy relationship all people share equal power, respect, control and decision-making.

3. There are signs of a healthy relationship, such as:
   - Safety. You and your partner are not afraid of each other.
   - Respect. Both people respect each other and make decisions together.
   - Trust. You encourage each other to have friends and do things separately sometimes. It is normal to be jealous sometimes, but what matters most is how you respond to your feelings.
   - Communication. You have good verbal and non-verbal communication. This builds trust, openness, and closeness.
   - Enjoyment. Both people have fun and enjoy the relationship.
   - Fairness. Both people are willing to compromise.
   - Boundaries. Each person sets and maintains boundaries about how close they want to be to other people, how they want to be touched, how they want to be spoken to, etc. You always respect each other’s boundaries.

4. There are also signs of an unhealthy relationship, such as:
   - Your partner is often angry with you.
   - Your partner criticizes the way you look or dress and makes you feel bad about yourself.
   - Your partner asks you to stop doing activities you enjoy, such as talking to friends.
   - Your partner makes all of the decisions or sets all of the rules.
   - You hide things from your partner because you’re worried they will get angry.
   - You’re afraid to say “no” to sex or sexual activities.
   - Your partner is violent with you.

5. You shouldn’t give up who you are when you’re in a relationship. Don’t become so involved with the other person that you lose yourself or forget who you are as an individual.
In an unhealthy relationship, your partner might say
that they are just showing their love for you. Unhealthy
relationships may involve mean, disrespectful, or
abusive behaviour. This can include threats, name-
calling, intimidation, blaming, etc. A jealous partner
is not showing their love, but is being possessive
and controlling.

Women are more often assaulted by their partners
than by strangers. Sexual assault is more common
in casual (short-term or dating) relationships, whereas
physical and psychological abuse is more common
in long-term relationships.

First Nations women experience violence more often
than other women. According to Statistics Canada,
Aboriginal women are three times more likely to be
victims of violence and spousal abuse. There are
many reasons for this, including colonization and
the poverty it created, as well as growing up in
an environment where abuse is the norm.

Abuse can hurt your physical, mental, and emotional
health. Emotional abuse, such as name-calling, can
lower your self-esteem. Victims of sexual assault can
become depressed, anxious, and even suicidal. They
may abuse drugs or alcohol to cope with these feel-
ings. They are also more likely to take part in risky
activities like unprotected sex.

If you think you are in an unhealthy relationship,
talk to someone you trust. This could be a health-
care provider, an elder, a counsellor, or a friend. There are also help lines you can call:

- National Clearinghouse on Family Violence
  1-800-267-1291

- National Domestic Violence Hotline
  1-877-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

- Kids Help Phone | 1-800-668-6868

First Nations Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization

⇒ www.naho.ca/fnc (under Publications)
  • Sexual health toolkit part I: Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (2011)
  • Sexual health toolkit part II: Sexuality and relationships (2011)

Mayo Clinic ⇒ www.mayoclinic.com
  • Signs of domestic violence against women
    ⇒ www.mayoclinic.com/health/domestic-violence/WO00044
  • Signs of domestic violence against men
    ⇒ www.mayoclinic.com/health/domestic-violence-against-men/MY00557

National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence ⇒ nacafv.ca
  • List of shelters ⇒ nacafv.ca/en/shelters

Women’s Health Matters
  ⇒ www.womenshealthmatters.ca/health-resources/sexual-health/sexual-expression

Sexuality and U ⇒ www.sexualityandu.ca