

From rom-coms and fairy tales to social media hashtags like #relationshipgoals, it's part of our culture to idealize relationships. But the reality is no relationship is perfect all the time. They all have ups and downs, and every partnership is unique. But a strong, healthy relationship is typically grounded in some core characteristics.

Here, Liza Eshilian-Oates, MD, physician and clinical lead of Kaiser Permanente's Family Violence Prevention Program, shares 8 major signs of a healthy relationship — and 5 signs of a toxic one.

8 signs you're in a healthy relationship

1. Mutual respect

Healthy relationships are built on mutual respect. "Your partner values your beliefs and who you are as a person," Dr. Eshilian-Oates explains. "They support your work, your dreams, they stick up for you, and they don't overstep your boundaries." These include your physical and emotional boundaries. For example, if you're not ready to talk about something, your partner gives you space and time to work it out.

2. Safety

Couples in a healthy relationship feel safe with each other. "You don't feel threatened, afraid, or like you must protect yourself from your partner," Dr. Eshilian-Oates explains, "and this means physically, emotionally, and even financially." When you're in a healthy relationship, your well-being is top of mind for your partner.

3. Open and honest communication

Talking with your partner should be easy, where you can share your thoughts and feelings without hesitation. "In a healthy relationship, you can talk to your partner without being afraid they'll get mad or shut you down," Dr. Eshilian-Oates says. Each person should be able to talk through their problems and feel heard and respected.

4. Compromise

Disagreements happen — even in healthy relationships — so compromise is key. When couples compromise, each person comes to the table, takes the other's feelings into consideration, and agrees on a decision together. It's not one person giving in to the other's will. "There's a little give on both sides. It has to be both partners," she says. "If it's one-sided and one person is always giving in to make the other person happy or not rock the boat, that's unhealthy."

5. Equality

When there's equality in a relationship, each partner respects the other's feelings and input. Your partner's needs don't dominate your relationship, and they don't have power or control of you. "When one person is making all the effort and the other one is just taking, then it's not equal," she says. "When each person is trying their best to make the other person feel loved and comfortable, that's a sign of a good relationship."

6. Independence

Healthy couples don't have to spend every minute with each other. It's important to have a life outside of your relationship. For example, your partner should support you seeing your family and friends and having separate hobbies, Dr. Eshilian-Oates says.

7. Support

Life is hard. There will always be things that don't go your way, so reliable support is key. "Having a partner who is there for you to listen and provide feedback and compassion when you need it is important," she says.

8. Privacy

In a relationship or not, you have the right to your own space. For example, you don't have to share your phone, email, or passwords with your partner just to make them happy. "A partner demanding to look through your phone and messages is a sign of someone not respecting your space and privacy, and it's a red flag," she says.

5 warning signs you're in a toxic relationship

1. Intensity

Intense relationships instantly go from 0 to 100 — for example, only knowing each other for 2 days and already thinking you're in love and inseparable. "Healthy relationships are slow-moving and deliberate, giving you time to get to know the other person," Dr. Eshilian-Oates says.

2. Isolation

"Intensity and isolation are often intertwined," she says. In an unhealthy relationship, you can become isolated as a couple and stop hanging out with friends and family.

3. Extreme jealousy

In this situation, just talking to others can spur intense jealousy, including accusations of cheating or fears that you're going to leave them, Dr. Eshilian-Oates explains. This jealousy can even be directed at time you spend with your family.

4. Belittling

Your partner should value your self-worth and take your needs into account. "Belittling your talents, opinions, and viewpoints is a red flag," she says.

5. Volatility

Extreme emotions and big swings in your relationship are not a good sign, Dr. Eshilian-Oates says. An example would be going from feeling so intensely in love one day to breaking up the next and then feeling like you can't live without each other again.