

# INTRO TO HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

**Healthy relationships** in **emerging adults** are vital for positive development, including their mental health. Meaningful connections and **healthy relationships** can foster a sense of security and safety in the world and put young people in a better position to ask for help when necessary. As a professional, you have an important role in helping **emerging adults** examine if their **relationships** are **healthy**.

## Relationships & Mental Health

Aim to help them build "stamina for difference," or engaging people different from themselves. This term replaces the typical use of "tolerance" (in word and mindset) with "stamina," putting the responsibility on each of us to move beyond simply tolerating others.

### Positive Youth Development

- What do youth **WANT** their **relationships to look like**, not merely what to avoid.
- **Resilience** is built through stressful situations with the support of our communities, schools, families, and friends.
- **Normalize the experience** of difficult interpersonal situations.
- Focus on helping youth keep themselves **safe** in potentially dangerous situations.

### 3 Types of Relationships



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The following pages provide examples of **healthy relationships** between **emerging adults** and their **family, friends, and romantic partner(s)**. Look at these markers as fluid between each type of relationship - they can cross over. Help teach **emerging adults** to create a mental checklist to self-evaluate their relationships.

## Family

Markers of healthy family relationships include:

### Guidelines

- Keep in mind that the **absence of conflict is not necessarily healthy** - good disagreements and tough conversations are the markers of families that welcome difference ("stamina for difference").
- Healthy conversations involve **feeling safe** to engage in **open communication** so that they are not afraid of getting into trouble for what they say.
- Have a **safe haven** and allow a space for the young person to "be a mess" and to "not be okay."
- It is vital to have **clear rules** and **responsibilities** for parents/caregivers and youth, and that **boundaries** are established and followed.
- A family's **religion, ethnicity, race** and **culture** likely shape family norms. For example, some cultures prioritize interdependence vs. independence, multi-generational homes, and elder respect.

Shared positive experiences

Differences welcomed

Interests supported

Independence encouraged

Open communication

Clear, age-appropriate expectations

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## Friendships

Markers of healthy friendships include:



Sincerity

Mutual Effort

Honest communication

Working through conflict

Support

## Guidelines

- **Intentional efforts** to repair after hurt feelings and tough conversations
- Celebrate **achievements** and **successes**
- **Support** each other through hardships and struggles
- Prioritize **spending time together**, having fun, and nurturing the relationship
- Encourage **good choices** and point out when our actions may be bad for us

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## Romantic

Markers of healthy romantic relationships include:

### Guidelines

- Spend **time** together.
- Share thoughts, feelings, and **validate** each other.
- Be **supportive** and **caring**:
  - "I'm here for you."
  - "You can be real with me."
- Share **physical** closeness and comfort.
- **Sexual** elements should be **healthy**, such as physical intimacy.
- Establish **clear** and **respectful boundaries** that allow everyone to feel safe, secure, and at ease, both mentally and physically.

Companionship

Closeness

Attachment

Intimacy

