

# Things You Can To Have Safe Relationships



- **What's a safe romantic or sexual relationship?**

A safe relationship is one where both partners treat each other with caring and respect. All couples argue and get mad and say things they later wish they hadn't said. But in a safe relationship, nobody plays emotional games; nobody tries to make anybody feel stupid, ugly, or guilty; nobody tries to have sex without protection from HIV and AIDS; nobody hits anybody; nobody forces anybody to do anything – including sex – that they don't want to do; nobody feels crazy; and nobody tries to keep secrets about the relationship.

In a safe relationship, you and your children are free to say and do what you really feel, without fear of being hurt. You're in the relationship because that's where you choose to be. You can talk about the relationship with trusted friends and not feel afraid.

- **Why is it so easy to get into unsafe relationships and so hard to get out?**

A partner who hurts, scares, or controls you or your kids might also have some very good qualities, and might be loving and good to you most of the time. Your partner might also have had a painful life and have a lot of pain and fear that nobody else seems to understand. He or she might be a good provider, helping you out with money problems.

It's easy to get confused when someone is really nice, then does something that hurts you, then is really sorry and treats you extra nice again – for a while. You start to wonder if you're crazy, or if you are imagining things. You might even believe it when he or she tells you bad things about yourself. You start to wonder if what happened was your fault. But you're not crazy, and it wasn't your fault. That's all part of the game your partner is playing.

Ending an unsafe relationship can be difficult. You might hang on hoping your partner will change. You might be afraid to end the relationship because you'd be left all alone to care for yourself and your children. You might be afraid your partner will get more violent if you try to leave. Maybe you need help finding a new place to live. Do not let these challenges keep you from getting safe.

**You deserve a safe relationship.** If your relationship isn't safe, you deserve to get help.

## Checklist

Has your partner ever:

	yes	no
Pretended you weren't there, called you or your child names, or made fun of you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Said mean things to you or your child, or tried to make you feel bad or guilty?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Said or done things to insult, embarrass, or humiliate you in front of other people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Withheld money to punish you or to force you to do something?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forced or bullied you into having sex without a condom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forced or scared you or your child into letting him or her do anything sexual?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened you or your child, or tried to keep you from leaving?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thrown things, broken things, punched the wall, or hurt an animal to hurt you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hit, kicked, choked, slapped, pushed, bitten, shaken, or burned you or your child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*If you answered "yes" to one or more questions, you need help right away to get safe. See the back side of this page. Don't leave this sheet anywhere your partner might ever see it – not even hidden in a drawer. Keep this sheet with you.*

# Steps You Can Take

- If you're just getting involved with someone, take it as slowly and carefully as you can. Until you know you can trust this person, do not be alone with him or her, and do not tell him or her private things. Meet with friends or in public places instead of at your home.
- Stay away from people who have bad tempers, are jealous or bossy, disrespect you or others, make fun of you or your ideas, tell you what to do, drink too much or use street drugs, or get too close or too physical too soon.
- If you're on a date and you have a "gut" feeling that something's not right, get out of the situation by yourself. Make an excuse to leave, and don't let the other person drive you home.
- Don't drink or use other drugs with a partner you don't trust. That would make it easier for the other person to blame you for his or her actions.
- If you decide to have sex, use a latex (rubber) condom with the spermicide (sperm-killer) Nonoxynol-9. Follow all of the instructions on the condom package. This is absolutely necessary for protection from HIV and AIDS. If your partner refuses to use a condom, don't have sex.
- If you have a feeling that something might not be right about the way your partner treats your children when you are not there, ask the children about it. If they say your partner is hurting them physically or sexually, take it seriously.
- If you're in a relationship that's hurting you or your children, talk to a friend or relative you can trust or to a domestic violence counselor who can help you decide what to do.
- Remember that a partner who has hurt you or your children once will do it again, and it will keep getting worse.
- Remember that you partner is most likely to strike out when he or she feels afraid or powerless. Don't put him or her down or threaten to leave.
- An abusive partner is most dangerous when he or she is afraid you're leaving. If you've decided to leave, make a plan and keep it secret, even from your kids. Get help from a domestic violence counselor in making your plan and following it.
- Remember that, as hard as it might be to get out of a hurtful relationship now, it will be a lot harder later, when the abuse has gotten worse.

## Information *and* Help

### **Educational brochures**

Prevention First  
www.prevention.org  
800.252.8951

### **Help with a violent partner**

National Domestic Violence Hotline  
www.ndvh.org  
800.799.7233

### **Help for sexual abuse and rape**

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network  
National Sexual Assault Hotline  
www.rainn.org  
800.656.HOPE (4673)

### **Coping with stress and anger at your children**

Illinois Child Abuse Hotline  
800.25.ABUSE (2.2873)

### **Referral to a variety of services and counseling**

Illinois Department of Human Services Helpline  
800.843.6154

### **Alcohol and/or drug treatment**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration  
Treatment Locator  
http://dasis3.samhsa.gov/  
800.662.HELP (4357)

### **Self-help for alcohol problems**

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

### **Self-help for other drug problems**

Greater Illinois Region of Narcotics Anonymous  
www.girsna.org  
800.539.0475