WHAT DOES A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP LOOK LIKE?

RELATIONSHIPS COME IN MANY FORMS

Healthy relationship skills apply to all of your relationships, including community connections and chosen family. Healthy relationships can come from:

Romantic partners
Friends
Family - both biological and chosen
Colleagues and coworkers
Community members, including religious or spiritual communities
Anyone you are close to or spend meaningful time with

LGBTQ+ RELATIONSHIPS LOOK DIFFERENT, AND THAT'S GOOD

LGBTQ+ relationships might look different from what you might see in mainstream media, and that's okay.

Relationships can be monogamous or polyamorous. They can be between two people of the same gender, different genders, or any combination. Partners may be trans, nonbinary, or gender non-conforming. All of these can be healthy.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

In every relationship, you have important rights.

You have the right to:

- Set limits on what you will and won't accept
- Make your own choices about your body and your life
- Leave when something does not feel safe or right

WHY HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Healthy relationships can make a real difference in your life. Benefits include:

- **Physical** - Better overall health
- **Mental and emotional** - Reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Help you feel confident and secure.
- **Social** - Build community and belonging. Expand your world rather than shrinking it.
- **Practical** - More resources, more help, and more options when life gets hard.

SOME OF THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP:

- **Mutual respect**: You value each other's feelings, limits, boundaries, opinions, and individuality
- **Trust and honesty**: You can be open with each other without fear.
- **Support**: You encourage each other's goals, self-expression, and growth.
- **Equality**: You both have an equal say in decisions that affect your relationship
- **Safety**: You can express your feelings and be yourself without fear of punishment.

WHERE DO YOUR RELATIONSHIPS FIT ON THE RELATIONSHIP SPECTRUM?

HEALTHY	UNHEALTHY	ABUSIVE
Open Communication · Supportive/Kind · Respect Boundaries/Privacy · Honesty and Trust · Independence · Mutual Choices · Healthy Conflict	Breaks in Communication · Extreme Emotions/Behaviors · Inconsiderate/Disrespectful · Dishonesty · Jealousy/Betrayal · Imbalance of Power · Possessive · Struggle for Control · Pressure · Deflection/Excuses	·Controlling ·Mean or Abusive Communication ·Violent Outbursts/Behaviors ·Belittling/Name Calling ·Accusations/Threats ·Sabotage or Manipulation ·Isolation ·Force ·Blame-shifting

YOU DESERVE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS!

Learn more about relationships, boundaries, communication, and abuse at **www.wyomingequality.org** and **www.wyomingdvsa.org**

WYOMING EQUALITY

WCADVSA
Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Funding Disclaimer: This project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling $135,000.00 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

BOUNDARIES, COMMUNICATION, AND SHOWING UP FOR EACH OTHER

WHAT BOUNDARIES ACTUALLY ARE

A boundary is a limit you set about what you will and won't accept in your relationships.

- A boundary is about your behavior and choices
- A boundary is not about controlling another person.
- A person who consistently ignores or pushes back on your limits is telling you something about their capacity, or willingness, to honor your boundaries.

RESENTMENT AS A SIGNAL

One sign that a boundary has been crossed, sometimes before you've even consciously named it, is **resentment**. Pay attention to any resentment you feel. It often means something needs to be named or addressed. Resentment that builds without being addressed tends to damage relationships over time. Think of it as an early warning signal worth listening to, not pushing down.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE A LIMIT

A simple way to communicate a boundary is this: When [X] happens, I feel [Y]. I need [Z].

For example: "When you go through my phone without asking, I feel like you don't trust me. I need you to ask before doing that."

CONFLICT HAPPENS - EVEN IN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Sometimes conflict will still happen. You haven't failed, this is just reality. Healthy conflict looks like:

- Both people feeling safe enough to say what they actually think.
- Disagreement that doesn't become contempt or cruelty.
- A willingness to hear the other person's perspective, even when you disagree.
- Working toward resolution rather than winning.

SHOWING UP FOR SOMEONE HAVING A HARD TIME

If someone shares something difficult with you, these responses often help:

- "I believe you."
- "I'm glad you told me."
- "What do you need right now?"
- "I'm not going anywhere."

THE FOUR-PART APOLOGY

Use these four steps to craft a genuine apology when you've hurt someone

Take responsibility. Name what you did. Be specific. Do not follow it with "but". *"I said something hurtful when I was frustrated, and that was wrong."*

Empathize. Acknowledge the impact on the other person, not just your intentions. "I can see why that made you feel dismissed."

Make amends. Where possible, try to repair what was broken. This might be a changed behavior or simply asking "*What do you need from me right now?*"

Set an intention. Name what you will do differently going forward, specifically. "*Next time I feel myself getting heated, I'm going to take a break before I respond.*"

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WHAT IS ABUSE?

ABUSE IS ABOUT POWER AND CONTROL

Abuse is not about anger, and it's not about conflict. It's about power and control. Abuse is a pattern of behaviors one person uses to maintain power over another. It can look like yelling or hitting, but it can also look like monitoring your phone, making you feel worthless, or threatening to out you to your family. It's not the same as having a heated argument. Abuse is ongoing. **And it is always the choice of the person doing it, never the fault of the person experiencing it.**

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If someone shares something difficult with you, these responses often help:

- "I believe you."
- "I'm glad you told me."
- "What do you need right now?"
- "I'm not going anywhere."

FORMS OF ABUSE

- **Physical abuse** - Hitting, pushing, restraining, or physically hurting you.
- **Emotional and psychological abuse** - Put-downs, humiliation, constant criticism, threats, and cutting you off from people you care about.
- **Sexual abuse** - Any sexual act done without your consent, including within a relationship.
- **Financial and economic abuse** - Controlling your access to money.
- **Digital abuse** - Monitoring your phone, accounts, or location. Sharing private photos of you without permission. Controlling who you can contact online.
- **Coercive control**- An ongoing pattern of behaviors that include isolation, surveillance, emotional manipulation, and financial control. These behaviors are designed to dominate every part of your life. It doesn't always involve physical violence, but it still causes deep harm.
- **Identity abuse** - Using someone's sexual orientation or gender identity as a tool of control. This can include threatening to out them to family, employers, or their community, pressuring them to de-transition, or making them feel their identity is shameful or wrong.

WHY ABUSE CAN BE HARD TO RECOGNIZE

Abusive behavior usually builds slowly. Early signs, like jealousy or wanting to spend all their time with you, can feel like love at first. For LGBTQ+ people, recognizing abuse can be complicated by real community dynamics. Concerns about being outed, historical distrust of police and shelters, and fear of reinforcing stereotypes about LGBTQ+ relationships can all cloud how abuse gets named and understood, both by individuals and by communities. Strong community networks, including chosen family, can make it easier to name what's happening and ask for help.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT LGBTQ+ RELATIONSHIPS AND ABUSE

Myth: *Abuse doesn't happen in same-gender relationships.* It does. Abuse is about power and control, not gender combination.
Myth: *If you're the same size or gender, it's not really abuse.* This is incorrect. Abuse is not about physical strength, it's about one person controlling another.
Myth: *LGBTQ+ communities are too tight-knit for abuse to happen.* Sadly, no. In fact, close community ties can sometimes be used as a tool of control. A threat to someone's social world can be just as powerful as a physical threat.
Myth: *Abuse is always obvious and gets bad quickly.* Abuse usually starts small and builds over time. Early signs can be easy to mistake for passion or intense love.
The reality: *Research shows that LGBTQ+ people experience intimate partner violence at rates equal to or higher than straight, cisgender people. It happens, it's not rare, and it's not your fault.*

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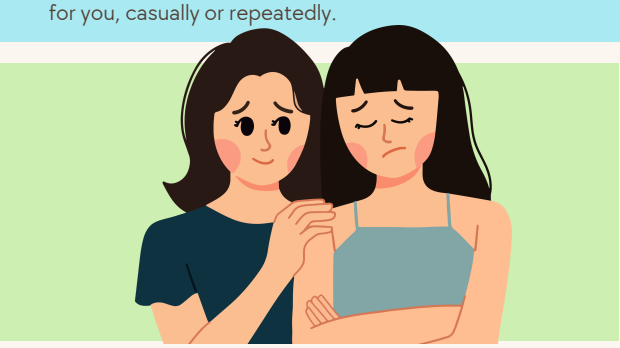
ABUSE: KNOWING WHAT TO LOOK FOR

HOW ABUSE DEVELOPS: EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- Extreme jealousy that's framed as love or devotion.
- Moving very fast. Wanting to be your "everything" right away.
- Making decisions for you without asking.
- Comments about who you are that feel dismissive.
- Pressure to come out before you're ready.
- Using your identity against you, making you feel like your sexual orientation or gender identity makes you lucky to have them, or that no one else would want you.
- Dismissing the names and terms you've asked people to use for you, casually or repeatedly.



HOW ABUSE DEVELOPS: LATER WARNING SIGNS

- Being cut off from friends or family.
- Your phone, location, or social media being monitored.
- Constant put-downs, especially in private.
- Feeling like you have to ask permission for basic things.
- Fear of your partner's reactions. Are you "walking on eggshells"?

SIGNS SOMEONE MAY BE IN A DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP

- Withdrawing from friends and activities they used to enjoy.
- Making excuses for their partner's behavior.
- Seeming anxious, fearful, or like they're always watching what they say.

SKILLS YOU CAN LEARN TO HELP A FRIEND IN NEED

- Stay in touch. Isolation is a tool of abuse.
- Listen without judgment. Believe what you are hearing.
- Avoid ultimatums like "leave or I can't be your friend". These often push people further away, not closer to safety.
- State your support plainly: "*I'm here. I believe you. I'm not going anywhere.*"

COMMUNITY AWARENESS IS PREVENTION

When more people in a community can recognize early signs of unhealthy dynamics before they escalate, it becomes harder for harm to take hold and easier for people to get support before things become serious. This includes chosen family and community networks, who show up for each other even when biological family can't or won't. That kind of community is one of the most powerful prevention tools we have.

THE CYCLE OF ABUSE

Tension building
Things feel strained. You walk on eggshells.

Incident
An abusive event happens.

Reconciliation
Apologies, affection, promises to change.

Calm
Things are quiet for a while

Repeat
The cycle starts again.

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RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

IF YOU NEED HELP RIGHT NOW

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** - provides care and support, referrals. Call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), text "START" to 87788, or visit thehotline.org. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- **Trans Lifeline** Call: 877-565-8860 Peer support run by and for trans people who can listen to you and connect you with support and resources.
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline** partners with trained staff members at local sexual assault services providers across the country to give those impacted by sexual violence emotional support, information, advice and referrals. Call 1-800-656-4673 or chat online. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- **Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline** is staffed by professional crisis counselors who offer crisis intervention, information and referrals. Call or text 1-800-422-4453. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** offers crisis intervention services if you or someone you care about is struggling with thoughts of suicide. Call or text 9-8-8. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7

COUNTY-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

Living in Wyoming and need local help? Visit *www.wyomingdvsa.org* for county-specific resources avaliable to you!

OTHER NATIONAL RESOURCES

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** a tool to find local assistance providers, including domestic violence shelters, case managers, counseling services and legal support by entering your zip code.
- **WomensLaw** emotional support, referrals and basic legal information related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking via email.
- **Victim Connect** provides referrals to crime victims and information about their rights and options. Weekdays during regular business hours and accessible by phone or text at 1-855-4VICTIM (84-2846) or live chat. Help is free and confidential.
- Love Is Respect offers teen and young adult specific support. Text "LoveIs" to 25522 or call 1-866-331-9474 to connect with an advocate. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

WYOMING-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

- **Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (WCADVSA) -** is a statewide network of local DV/SA programs across Wyoming. Visit *wcadvsa.org*
- **Wyoming Equality -** Wyoming's only statewide LGBTQ+ advocacy organization. We can help connect you to affirming healthcare providers experienced in treating LGBTQ+ people, DV/SA advocates, and other support. Visit www.wyomingequality.org
- **Legal Aid of Wyoming** provides free civil legal help to low-income individuals in Wyoming.

NATIONAL LGBTQ+-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

- **The Trevor Project** is available for LGBTQ+ youth in crisis by calling 1-866-488-7386 or texting "START" to 678678. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- **GLBTQ Domestic Violence Project -** Resources for LGBTQ+ survivors of domestic violence. glbtqdvp.org
- **Trans Lifeline -** Peer support and crisis resources for trans and nonbinary people. translifeline.org

NATIONAL IDENTITY-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

- **Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project** provides services to Asian/Pacific Islander survivors. They have a free, confidential helpline in 20+ languages. Call 202-833-2233 on weekdays 7am and 4pm MT.
- **The Network/La Red** for LGBTQ+, kink and polyamorous communities who have experienced abuse. Helpline. 1-800-832-1901. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- **StrongHearts Native Helpline -** serves Native American and Alaska Natives. Call or text 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483).
- **Ujima** provides referrals, education, and forums for survivors across the African diaspora. Call 1-844-77-UJIMA (85462)

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