

## Relationship Skills: Learn to manage your relationship

### What are relationship issues and what makes a healthy relationship?

Sometimes we struggle with undesirable/uncomfortable feelings triggered by the actions and behaviours of others. If this feels like you, you are among the many Canadian adults dealing with similar relationship issues.

Relationships are a necessary part of healthy living, but there is no such thing as a perfect relationship. Relationships, from acquaintances to romances, have the potential to enrich our lives and add to our enjoyment of life. However, these same relationships can cause discomfort, and sometimes even cause harm. Take a few minutes to learn more about how to protect yourself from developing unhealthy relationships. It can be a struggle to work through difficult or emotionally challenging problems with others however, with the right tools and strategies you can learn to address these issues head on.

A healthy relationship is when two people develop a connection based on:

- Mutual respect
- Trust
- Honesty
- Support
- Fairness/equality
- Separate identities
- Good communication
- A sense of playfulness/fondness

### Relationship Management Strategies

Relationship issues can have far reaching effects on overall mental health and wellness. Whether it's at work, at home, or in everyday life, the management of relationships can be improved with the right approach.

If you're struggling with relationship issues, try some of the below listed strategies.

- **Assertive communication** - To develop the self-respect and self-worth that are required for effective assertive communication, start by knowing what you want and believing that you have the right to ask for what you want. Clear and calm communication is key. Remember, there is a difference between being assertive and being aggressive: aggressive=my needs matter and your needs don't matter, assertive=both of our needs are equally important.
- **Communicating shared goals** - When conflict arises, try to find a common goal and the shared value of those goals (e.g., 'we both want less conflict' or 'we both want to feel closer'). This way, you will work together toward a positive outcome rather than working against one another.
- **Shifting expectations of others** - Sometimes it can be difficult to live up to our own and others' expectations of the roles that we play in our lives (e.g., being a good partner, employee, parent, friend). To avoid frustration and conflict, be thoughtful and open about realistic expectations.

# Worksheet: Examining cause and effect



The following worksheet can be used to explore the cause and effect relationship between actions or behaviours that are a common source of conflict or discomfort in relationships and can help facilitate assertive communication.

1. Find a quiet private space where you can take time to reflect on a circumstance within which you experienced relationship issues, and where you can complete the following worksheet.
2. Consider a circumstance in which an individual has made you feel uncomfortable feelings as a results of some specific action or behaviour.
3. Imagine an alternative to the triggering behaviour that in future, would help to avoid the resulting uncomfortable feelings.
4. When you have completed worksheet sentences, find an opportunity to speak with that individual using the completed sentence from this worksheet.

You can use this worksheet or a separate piece of paper to fulfill the following sentence:

**When you do** \_\_\_\_\_

**I feel** \_\_\_\_\_

**Could you do** \_\_\_\_\_ **instead?**

## Additional Resources

**Books:** How to Talk to Anyone: 92 Little Tricks for Big Success in Relationships by Leil Lowndes, Conversationally Speaking by Alan Carner, and People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others and Resolve Conflicts by Robert Bolton, Ph.D.

*Please note that this handout should not be considered as or substituted for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Layla is not a healthcare provider so your use of this article is at your own risk. If you or someone you know are in need of immediate care, are in crisis or danger of harm, call 911 or proceed to your nearest emergency room immediately.*

If you are experiencing extreme issues that disrupt everyday life and the solutions provided on this tips sheet have proven unhelpful, please consult a licensed professional for further support.