Thirty Ways to a Healthy and Respectful Relationship

This handout is designed to provide ideas on how to improve and maintain a healthy and satisfying relationship. If you have questions about any of the items listed below, contact Christopher Hall at DVInterventionEducation@gmail.com

1) Understand Boundaries: Learn what your partner’s emotional and physical space is, and work to understand your own.

2) Honor Boundaries: Accept your partner’s right to have boundaries and enforce them, while respectfully enforcing your own needs.

3) Practice Listening: Listening is a skill that needs to be practiced frequently. Avoid interrupting, work to hear, understand and care about your partner’s side of a discussion, remember to notice body language.

4) Argue Respectfully: When you have a difference of opinion, work to see the part of your partner’s point of view you agree with. Work on discussing ways to expand that middle ground and come up with an agreement or be content with respectfully disagreeing.

5) Maintain Your Self-Care Needs: You are responsible for your own body and mind. If you have health or mental health needs, address them and discuss how you plan to meet those needs with your partner.

6) Know Your Non-Negotiables: Everyone has certain rules that they do not want to break. It is important to know what those are so that you can have serious conversations with your partner about them, and learn what your partner’s non-negotiables are as well.

7) Show Appreciation as Often as Possible: Show through your words, actions, gestures, and attitude. Find ways to express appreciation for your partner and keep that in the front of your heart and mind.

8) Learn to Navigate Hard Times with Dignity: All relationships have difficulties. How you and your partner work through these challenges can impact the quality of your relationship. Upholding character and personhood will make for a healthier relationship than becoming bitter and resentful of your partner and the bad situations you face.

9) Share your Life with your Partner: It is important to continually share your life, experiences, struggles with your partner, and listen to your partner’s as well.

10) Be Flexible with Chores: Couples tend to divide chores by schedule or by activity. For healthy maintenance of a relationship, shifting schedules or chores as needed is important and necessary.

11) Give the Benefit of the Doubt: Contempt is the biggest destroyer of relationships. This can be avoided by maintaining an attitude where you work to assume the best of your partner. Of course, your partner will fail on occasion, but if you have positive regard, failures can be resolved, discussed and shifted constructively.

12) Discuss your Values and Meaning in Life: It is important to have ongoing discussions about life, about values, about goals, about your relationship. If there are critical differences, it will be challenging for the relationship to remain healthy and respectful over these differences.

13) Be Okay with not Being in Complete Agreement: You and your partner will have varying opinions. Being able to appreciate those differences rather than resenting them is important in avoiding a buildup of contempt.

14) Make Time to be with Your Partner: Making your partner a priority is important. Making time will keep a relationship connection going.

15) Learn and talk about your partner’s hobbies: When valuing your partner, a healthy part of this value is honoring different activities your partner enjoys, and support your partner in doing them. This allows connection and freedom to interact together.

16) Encourage Space: Making sure that you and your partner have alone time is an important part of being independent and appreciative of time together.

17) Be Aware of Your Irritating and Alienating Behavior: Acknowledge small things that build wedges between you and your partner and stop them before they grow.

18) Own Up to Mistakes and Harmful Behavior: Admitting and talking about concrete ways you will avoid repeating mistakes are excellent ways to build emotional and psychological intimacy with your partner.

19) Know what Kind of Support Your Partner Appreciates and Do It as Often as Possible: Every person has things that give them the most comfort, the most assistance, the most strength. Getting to know what kind of ways you can best be there for your partner will make a big difference in your relationship over time.

20) Understand the Difference Between Negotiation and Compromise; Use when Your Plans Are Different: With negotiation preferences shift from one partner to another. Compromise is coming to a middle ground.

21) Be Inclusive: Having an overall attitude of wanting your partner to be a part of your life, and a part of you specifically helps in maintaining healthy connections.

22) Be Open and Transparent: Knowing how to be transparent about your motives, your choices, your process and being open to feedback and discussion is much more important than honesty. Everyone has times they do not tell the full truth, but maintaining openness and transparency, there is more of an opportunity to be trustworthy and honorable on a consistent basis.

23) Let Time Run its Course: Rushing might resolve one issue, but if your partner feels pressured it might lead to a result that could be a source of regret. Even when the pressure to be timely is stressful, it is important to understand the process leading up to a decision.

24) Remember the Value You Have for Your Partner: The key to avoiding hurtful decisions can be to keep your partner’s value strong in your mind.

25) Acknowledge Your Partner’s Humanity: Keeping a balance in your relationship by knowing that you and your partner are both human beings with less than ideal traits is as much a part of choosing your partner as those things you like the most.

26) Connect with Support Beyond Your Partner: It is good to have an outside network of friends, family and others who can provide support as a part of personal self-care. This keeps from putting the burden of support solely on your partner’s shoulders.

27) Handle Tough Decisions Together: Know when decisions need shared input. These can be during tough situations, but can also be in mundane events where your partner wants to be involved.

28) Be Assertive: It is healthiest to be assertive for your personal needs and the needs of your partner. Aggressive or passive methods of meeting needs, or ignoring your partner’s needs can be unhealthy.

29) Understand Respect: When you consider respect to be the ability and desire to listen and care about another person’s thoughts, opinions and emotions, it opens up a focus on valuing your partner and your relationship.

30) Balance Intimacy: Working to balance intimacy is an important ongoing activity, and knowing how to build physical, emotional, and mental intimacy equally as your relationship evolves is what helps to evolve a healthy relationship over time with your partner.

*This list is adapted from “30 Years - 30 Ways to a Healthy Relationship” originally published in 2012 by the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, written by Christopher Hall, MSW. Inquiries about this list can be sent to DVInterventionEducation@gmail.com