



Respectful Relationships

Let's start with respect.

- Respect is something we demonstrate through our behaviour towards others.
- We show respect by valuing each other for who we are irrespective of our differences, by being considerate of the needs and wishes of others and by treating everyone equally and fairly.
- Everyone deserves to be treated with respect. But sometimes we're not. This includes when:
 - we are pressured to do something that we do not want to do
 - we are treated by someone like we are less important than them
 - our needs and wishes are dismissed or intentionally overlooked by others
 - we are treated differently and less favourably because of our age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, cultural identity, religion or other personal characteristic.

Challenge disrespectful behaviour.

If you see or hear someone engaging in inappropriate and unwanted behaviour that is directed at someone else, be an *active bystander* and call it out (provided it is safe to do so). This includes calling out those who downplay the impact of such behaviour or attempt to shift blame to the person who is the target of the behaviour.

Be accountable for your words and actions.

- Alcohol and other drugs can decrease our inhibitions, increase our confidence and impair our judgement and decision-making - all of which can increase the chances of saying or doing things that may offend or upset those around you. Be mindful of your behaviour when you've been drinking alcohol or taken other drugs. Everyone wants to have a good time and your good time should not involve acting in way that is disrespectful towards others. Being under the influence is never an excuse for bad behaviour.

Respectful relationships are healthy relationships.

- Respectful relationships are fundamental to our health and wellbeing.
- Healthy relationships are based on mutual respect, equality, trust, honesty and effective communication.
- In a healthy, respectful relationship, you will feel free to be yourself, comfortable speaking your mind and loved and understood by your partner for who you are. You will both share decision-making and respect each other's independence and right to make your own decisions about matters that affect you.
- When it comes to sex, you and your partner will always respect each other's boundaries, seek each other's consent and take joint responsibility for practising *safer sex*. You will tell your partner if you are ever diagnosed with an *STI* or suspect that you may have an *STI* and they will do the same for you.
- Having different opinions and disagreements with your partner is not always a sign that your relationship is unhealthy. A relationship is unhealthy when there is a lack of mutual respect, equality, trust or honesty between both partners. This includes when one partner exercises power and control over the other.

Controlling behaviour within a relationship isn't healthy and it's not okay.

- Control is being used in a relationship when one partner makes all or the majority of the decisions in the relationship and constantly tells the other partner what to do.
- Coercion is being used in a relationship when one partner uses physical or psychological intimidation to force the other partner into doing something that they do not wish to do.
- Coercive control involves a range of manipulative behaviours by one partner over the other. Examples include telling a partner what they can and can't wear, checking a partner's phone and social media accounts without their consent, restricting a partner's contact with their family and friends and controlling a partner's access to money. Coercive control is a form of intimate partner violence.

- Know the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships. If you or your partner are under the influence of alcohol and other drugs it may not be the best time to discuss important and sensitive issues. Try waiting for a better time when you are both sober, relaxed and not distracted by other things.
- If you believe you or a friend or family member is experiencing coercive control in an intimate relationship, there is help available. Contact **1800 RESPECT** on 1800 737 732 - it is free, confidential and available 24/7.
- **If you are in immediate danger, call Victoria Police on 000.**