

If you're in an abusive relationship it is important to find someone you trust to talk to about your feelings, and to make a safety plan for yourself. If you feel you can't break up with the person, talk to family and friends and get them to help protect you by being around. If you decide to break up with the person it is a good idea to have a friend or family member with you at the time, and talk to someone about what you can do to legally protect yourself.

Abuse and violence is not acceptable in any relationship. In fact, it's against the law. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect, and help is available.

Bullying can be verbal (name calling, insults, threats, teasing, harassment), physical (being punched/kicked, having your belongings stolen or damaged), social (being left out, ignored or having rumours spread about you) or psychological (dirty looks or stalking).

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying carried out over the internet (through email, chat rooms, social networking sites, instant messaging etc) and includes bullying via mobile phones.

A bully can be an individual or a group of people. It can be a member of your family, someone you thought was your friend, someone the same age as you, a stranger or a boyfriend or girlfriend.

A bully can also be an older person. Being the victim of bullying can lower your self-esteem and leave you feeling alone, sad, depressed, angry, scared or confused.

If you are being bullied tell someone you trust. Make it clear that it is a problem for you and keep telling people until something is done to stop it. Bullying in any form is not acceptable.

Relationship ready

Relationships are complex, and there is more to them than what is written here. Remember that it's OK to take your time making decisions when it comes to relationships, and don't feel pressured to do anything you don't want to. Everyone deserves to have healthy relationships.

For more information contact:

FPWA Sexual Health Services

Clinical, Education and Library Services
70 Roe Street, Northbridge WA 6003
Ph 08 9227 6177 | info@fpwa.org.au

Roe St Centre for Human Relationships

70 Roe Street, Northbridge WA 6003
Ph 08 9228 3693 | roest@fpwa.org.au

Quarry Health Centre for Under 25s

7 Quarry Street, Fremantle WA 6160
Ph 08 9430 4544 | quarry@fpwa.org.au

Sexual Health Helpline

Metropolitan callers 08 9227 6178
Country callers 1800 198 205
sexhelp@fpwa.org.au

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For more information on relationships visit www.getthefacts.health.wa.gov.au

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Relationships



What is a healthy relationship?

While there are lots of different types of relationships, healthy relationships are all based on similar foundations. A healthy relationship includes:

- respecting each others thoughts, feelings and opinions
- feeling comfortable around each other, and being able to be yourself
- being able to disagree without feeling intimidated
- spending time with other people
- being able to say no when you don't want to do things
- having fun together.

Being in a healthy relationship also means having a good relationship with yourself. Think about what you want in life and enjoy your own company. Only you can decide if you want a relationship – you may feel being single gives you more freedom to do what you want and be independent.

If you do decide you want to be in one, knowing what you want from a relationship isn't easy - it takes time, sometimes even years to figure out, and this can change over time. For some, enjoying friendship, closeness, love and romance are important things in a relationship, while for others it's an opportunity to have sex. Everybody wants different things, so it's important to think about what you want and expect in a relationship.

"I trust her, I feel happy and more confident"

"She accepts me and encourages me to be myself"

"I know he's not going to do anything I don't want, so I feel safe"



Who do I like?

No one knows what causes our sexual attractions. Many people think of sexuality as a range of sexual attraction - some people are attracted to the same sex, some are attracted to the opposite sex and some are attracted to both sexes. These feelings can change at different times in your life.

"I've always had stronger feelings for girls"

"I've never really thought about it - I've always liked boys"

"Some people find it hard to understand, but I've always liked guys and girls"

Working out who you are attracted to can be a confusing and challenging time – it's OK to be unsure and question your sexuality. It's all part of finding out about yourself. Don't feel pressured to explain your sexuality to others if you don't want to – deciding whether to tell people or not is your choice.

Getting started

So you're attracted to someone...now what? Most people want to spend time getting to know one another. If you already know the other person, think about how much you value their friendship – if you make a physical move and they don't want to get involved, it might complicate things. Try and check out how they are feeling first.

Though it can be scary, start a conversation or send them a text message or email. Showing someone you're interested in them takes courage, but you might find they are feeling the same way as you! If they're not interested or don't respond, at least you know where you stand. If someone approaches you and you don't want to get involved, it's OK to say 'no thanks' regardless of who they are.

If you've decided you want to be in a relationship, but haven't met anyone you like, get out there and meet people by doing things you enjoy, such as playing a sport or joining a club. Some people use the internet to find friends, but be aware of giving out your personal details online. This can be dangerous, as people are not always who they say they are.

Making relationships work

Sometimes relationships are tough, but there are things that you can do to help make your relationships work, such as:

- be open and honest with each other
- agree on boundaries (acceptable behaviour in the relationship)
- when disagreeing, listen to one another, sometimes agreeing to disagree
- spend time together as well as apart
- even when it's difficult, talk to one another, or find another way to express yourself
- talk to others, such as a friend or a counsellor.

Having sex

The development of sexual relationships is an important part of many people's lives. It is important though, that when it comes to relationships and sex, not to feel pressured, and to take your time deciding. Being in a healthy relationship doesn't necessarily mean you have to have sex.

If you are feeling pressured to have sex, talk to your partner or someone else about how you are feeling.

"We've talked about sex and stuff and think we're ready"

"At this stage of our relationship I only feel comfortable with kissing"

"I think I want to have sex, but I'm not sure. I think I need more time"

Sometimes people confuse 'love' and 'sex'. Just because you are 'in love' with someone doesn't mean you have to have sex with them. You can also have a relationship with someone you don't love – you just might like them a lot and enjoy spending time together.

If you do decide to have sex, talk about safe sex early on with your partner. Negotiating safe sex can feel a bit awkward, but having unprotected sex even once can put you at risk of pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Use condoms to reduce the risk of getting or passing on an STI, and talk to a health professional about contraception choices.

When it comes to sex, both partners must always give consent. This means you must both agree without being pressured, forced or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. You must also both understand what you are agreeing to.

Unhealthy relationships

Abusive relationships are where one person intimidates the other to get them to do what they want. Many people, especially young people, don't always realise they are in an abusive relationship. Be aware for these warning signs:

Emotional abuse can involve extreme jealousy and possessiveness. It is when someone insults you, humiliates you, or tries to control what you feel, think, wear and who you see. They may also threaten to hurt themselves or other people if you break up with them.

Physical abuse is any act that physically hurts or frightens you, like being hit, slapped, pushed or kicked. It also includes acts of violence such as throwing or breaking things, or threatening to do this, or stalking you.

Sexual abuse is when someone makes you do or tries to make you do sexual things that you don't want to do by bribing, forcing or threatening you, such as saying things like 'you'd do it if you loved me' or not stopping when you ask.

Verbal abuse is often in the form of screaming and shouting, using abusive language, calling you names, or making negative comments about how you look or your abilities.

"I feel I have to watch what I say and do all the time, otherwise he loses his temper and gets really angry"

"I feel depressed, especially around her. She seems to take all my energy and I don't have much left"

"I feel like I'm losing all my friends and family because he won't hang out with them and he's rude to them. I feel so embarrassed"