

# Relate NI

## Top Tips for supporting healthy relationships & mental fitness at College/University

### Healthy Relationships

College is all about new experiences: the start of a new life, new friends, new freedom, and new relationship experiences. Not surprisingly, romantic and friendship relationships are responsible for some of life's happiest moments and are inextricably linked to our mental health. This resource will support students to build healthy relationships at college/Uni and improve their relationship wellbeing.

### Starting a New Relationship

One of the typical Uni/College experiences may be the search to form new relationships, including friends and romantic interactions. If there was a law of attraction it would state that you should find someone as similar to you as possible. However, we all know that opposites attract also. If you are studious, like the outdoors, and enjoy films, your partner or new friend should as well. Or maybe they like live gigs, art and cooking; things you have an interest in but don't know much about; what a great opportunity to find out about other pursuits.

When looking for a partner, you'll want to detect whether the other person is interested. Did the object of your affection give you "the look", or was there simply something in their eye? Here it is important to realise that what we are communicating (I wanna be mates or I am romantically interested in you) may not be what the other person is understanding or reading from us. Clear communication is important to avoid crossed wires.

### Dealing with Break-up

Break-ups can result in negative emotions and feeling less sure of who you are. To get over a break-up, with either a friend or partner, try concentrating about the positive aspects of the experience - what have you learned? Reach out to your social support, some of your uni friends may have had similar experiences. And rather than jumping right back into a relationship, spend some time alone and focus on yourself because having a clear sense about who you are will lead to

better relationships down the road. Remember, your relationship with yourself is the most important one you have!

### Building a Healthy Relationship

Everyone wants to have a great relationship. To accomplish this goal you should build your relationship around a solid friendship founded on trust, closeness, honesty, and a sense of openness that includes mutual self-disclosure, and appreciation. To achieve this, good communication is important especially when discussing problems. Many people (mistakenly) believe that disagreements are destructive in relationships. However, you should be secure enough in your relationship to discuss the small issues that inevitably arise so that they don't turn into major dramas. Most importantly, avoid negative forms of communication like criticising partners, being overly defensive, refusing to talk/shutting them out, or having a lack of respect or contempt.

Love is also important in healthy relationships, but what type of love is most important? There are two main types: companionate love, which is based on friendship, and passionate love, which is based on attraction and preoccupation with the partner. Although passion may get a relationship started, it fades. A romance with a partner who is also your best friend is more likely to stand the test of time. When thinking about love, avoid the mistaken belief that love conquers all. Love is a key ingredient, but it does not mean that you should tolerate disrespectful or abusive behaviour.

### Relationship Abuse

Although a majority of relationships don't experience physical or verbal abuse, the prevalence of intimate partner violence is growing. Yet, people in abusive relationships often believe that because it happens to them it must be "normal" and happening in most relationships. If you or a friend experience relationship abuse, seek help from your Student Well-Being Hub on 0300 123 1223 or online at [src.ac.uk/support/health-and-wellbeing-hub/](http://src.ac.uk/support/health-and-wellbeing-hub/).

### In Conclusion...

A healthy relationship will help make you a happier and better person without requiring you to forsake your friendships or educational goals. Learning these basics of healthy relationships will come in handy during your college/Uni experience, and will also benefit your future relationships in a way that will lead you to experience a happier and more fulfilling life.

For more self-help tips and tools for relationship support and improving mental wellbeing, or to find out more information on our relationship counselling services, visit our website: <https://www.relateni.org/golden-threads/>