



# Building healthy relationships

## Defence Community Organisation

**Healthy relationships are an important aspect of health and wellbeing. Good quality relationships can help us feel safe, connected and positive about the future.**

### WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

Different people will define relationships in different ways. Generally, a healthy relationship is when two people mutually respect, support, and value each other.

Arguments and disagreements in relationships, from time to time, are normal. However, it is important that both partners treat each other as equals and communicate respectfully to resolve any issues.

It is never ok for someone to be violent or abusive during an argument and to make someone else feel fearful or scared.

### SIGNS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

**Equality** where both people feel like equals, such as in decision making, sharing of resources (i.e. money), and domestic responsibilities. It is important to have conversations about what equality looks like to both people in the relationship.

**Respect** each other and value the individual person despite differences of opinion, values or beliefs. It is also important to have respect for sexual boundaries.

**Trust** in each other where both people should feel safe and secure in the relationship. Either person in the relationship should not have to worry about violence or abusive behaviour.

**Support** each other through day-to-day experiences and personal aspirations.

### Positive communication and conflict management

each person is able to express themselves without fear of consequences and disagreements are settled fairly.

### Experience both shared and separate identities

it is important in a healthy relationship to spend quality time together and to have shared activities and/or interests.

It is also healthy to maintain a degree of independence, such as being able to freely see friends, family, or separately engage in activities you enjoy.

### UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Most relationships will have their ups and downs. Building strong and healthy relationships takes effort and attention, and that's especially true of military relationships.

The demands of Defence life, such as frequent relocations, long separations and high work tempo, can place additional stress on personal relationships.

### WARNING SIGNS OF AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

If you notice any of the aspects below in your relationship, then it may be time for a 'relationship health check-up' or to seek professional support.

- Do not spend quality time together
- Feeling pressure to change who you are for the other person



- Uneven responsibility for domestic duties and/or raising children (unless equally agreed)
- Disagreements are not settled fairly
- Verbal abuse (i.e. name calling or put downs) or physical violence during an argument
- Lack of privacy or repeatedly having to justify behaviour (i.e. being questioned where you went or searching through phone)
- Unsupportive of aspirations or dreams
- Unequal access to resources (i.e. money, food, car etc.)
- Lack of intimacy or conversely feeling pressure to have sex
- Feeling pressure to stop doing activities that you enjoy
- Isolated from friends and/or family or being unable to socialise
- Lack of fairness and equality in the relationship

It may not always be obvious if you are in an unhealthy or even an abusive relationship. However, when one person in the relationship feels unsafe or fearful, this is usually a clear indication that there are serious problems.

If you or someone you know feels this way, then there are a range of support services available to assist.

### **SUPPORT OPTIONS**

All relationships experience complicated and challenging periods. There are a range of services and resources available that can provide support during these times.

#### **Defence Family Helpline**

The Defence Family Helpline is part of the Defence Community Organisation, and is staffed by human services professionals including social workers and psychologists. They are available 24 hours a day to provide advice, information and support, and can also refer you to other support agencies.

1800 624 608

[defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au](mailto:defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au).

#### **Open Arms – Veterans and Family Counselling**

Open Arms offers individual, couples and family counselling, as well as group programs to help current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families.

1800 011 046

#### **Relationships Australia**

Relationships Australia offers counselling, family dispute resolution, mediation, and a range of family and community support and education programs.

1300 364 277

[www.relationships.org.au](http://www.relationships.org.au)

#### **Family Relationships Online**

Family Relationships Online provides all families with access to information about family relationship issues, ranging from building better relationships to dispute resolution.

The Family Relationships Online website provides a range of information, resources and advice for families.

[www.familyrelationships.gov.au](http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au)

#### **1800RESPECT**

A professional telephone and online crisis and trauma counselling service for anyone impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse. Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Contact can be anonymous.

1800 737 732

#### **Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)**

A victim-focused Defence advice service for ADF members, former members, and ADF families who have been impacted by, or are experiencing sexual misconduct.

1800 736 776

If you have any questions after reading this information sheet, contact the Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608 or [defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au](mailto:defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au).

