

## **"What a Respectful Relationship Means to Me"**

A respectful relationship cannot be achieved easily without continual work from both people in the relationship. First, it is important that partners in relationship consider each other equals. Due to the fact that we live a society where classism, racism, and sexism are so common, it is difficult for people to feel as though they are good enough. Relationships are also put into an unattainable (and for many people undesirable) stereotype in which you are supposed to fall in love, get married, have children, and live happily ever after, but that's not how life will turn out for all people.

In a healthy, respectful relationship everyone involved must first realize that they may need to let go of preconceived notions about how relationships do and do not work. They need to accept that the relationship requires hard work, may have difficulties, and might possibly end. Once people realize that they are not going to have a perfect relationship, then they can start to work on having a respectful relationship where everyone is happy and content.

Healthy relationships allow both partners to be able to say what they need without fear of the other partner becoming angry or hurt because of what they said. It is very important that you talk about things and move your relationship forward at a pace at which everyone is comfortable. There is also no point in a relationship where you are simply done having to talk or to work to keep the relationship moving forward; relationships require continual work even once you are married.

There needs to be freedom in relationships. People need to be involved with other friends and other activities. If you spend all your time doing nothing but being with your partner then other things in your life will get neglected, such as family, work, and physical health. Therefore, it is important that people spend time with their partners, but to also take time to develop other relationships and have goals and plans they try to meet. Perhaps it seems silly to have to state this, but it is also important that people in relationships together actually like each other. If you don't like the person you are in a relationship with, then don't be in a relationship with them. This concept is one of the simplest and most important things in a relationship.

Counseling can be also be a healthy choice for relationships. Instead of using counseling as a last resort to try and save a relationship, it is a chance for partners to sit and talk through their concerns and issues with an impartial person there to help.

While there may be many challenges to having a healthy, respectful relationship, it can be done. If partners work hard, keep an open mind, and have reasonable expectations for what may happen, then it is possible to have a happy, respectful relationship.

Lennon Medvick  
Age 15  
Bat Cave, NC