



Choosing to Make a Commitment



Healthy relationships are the result of good choices and hard work. Choosing a partner carefully is an important part of lasting relationships. Even if you feel like someone is your “soul mate” or think a relationship was “meant to be,” take time to reflect before getting serious and making a commitment to that person.

There are many things to consider when making this important decision. Below are a few things that help make relationships healthy. Read through the following statements and mark **YES** or **NO** to each one. It takes time to learn about our partners, so if you don’t know yet, check **NOT SURE**.

Yes No Not Sure

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | My partner respects me and treats me with kindness. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I know this person well, and have seen how s/he acts in many kinds of situations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We value many of the same things and have similar interests. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have talked about how many kids we want to have. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have the same ideas about how to raise children. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I like the way this person treats my (and his/her or other) children. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I can put up with our differences. (Remember, many will not change!) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Drugs and alcohol are not a part of our current life. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have similar values and ideas about how to handle money. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | When we have disagreements we are able to talk (not yell) through them. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I know what this person’s family is like and I can see things I like about my partner in them. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friends and family who I trust think this person is right for me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | My partner never pressures me to do things I do not want to do, or that I think are wrong. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have talked about our goals for the future. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Our relationship is free from violence.* |

* Violence is never part of a healthy relationship. If you or someone you love has been a victim of relationship violence, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE) from a safe telephone. No one deserves to be hurt.

- For statements you checked “YES” to, would your partner also answer yes? Talk with your partner about these things to make sure you are on the same page.
- If you answered “NO” to any of these questions, think carefully before committing to this relationship. This person might not be the best partner for you (and/or your children).
- If you are “NOT SURE,” take extra time to talk with your partner about these things and to learn more about your partner before you make the decision to commit.

Are there other things that are important to you in a relationship? What else do you want or need for your partner before you feel comfortable making a commitment to them? Have you and your partner discussed these items?

Healthy relationships involve deciding, not sliding. Make sure the relationship is right for you (and your children) before making a commitment.



Do You Avoid Hurtful Thoughts and Behaviors?



What we choose to think or say about our partner can help or harm the relationship. People often have rules or expectations about their relationship. Some of these “ground rules” include how partners treat each other, how they discuss problems, and the types of information that should or should not be shared with others. Below are some things that couples do that can help or hurt a relationship. What do you do? What do you feel that you could work on, do more or less of, or do better?

Things that Help a Relationship	I Do	I Need to Work On
I listen to my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I make time for my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't let my family come between us	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I keep promises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't keep secrets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think about my partner's positive qualities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I remember things that are important to my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try to understand my partner's point of view	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I thank my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Things that Hurt a Relationship	I Don't	I Need to Work On
I yell and shout at my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I say things to make my partner feel bad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tell friends about problems in my relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I sometimes flirt with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often compare my partner to other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think about all the ways I want my partner to change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I put down my partner's ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I cut my partner off when talking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I walk away from my partner during disagreements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you doing more things that help (not hurt) your relationship? If so, great!

If there are things you feel you can work on, what steps can you take to improve? Perhaps there are some new ground rules that you could create for your relationship to avoid hurtful thoughts and behaviors. Choose one or two things above to work on, or decide on something else to do, or stop doing, that will help strengthen your relationship.

Choosing to think and act in positive ways and avoiding hurtful thoughts and behaviors will strengthen your relationship.



Ways to Show Commitment



It takes more than loving feelings to have a healthy relationship. It also takes commitment. Commitment means you will keep on treating your partner with respect, even if you are upset or angry. Commitment also means that you promise to support your partner now and in the future. How couples show commitment in a relationship can differ depending on past and present experiences and expectations.

Below is a list of actions that show commitment to a relationship. For each statement, decide whether it's something you do well or something you would like to do better.

I Already Do Well	I Would Like To Do Better	Committed Actions
		I make time to do things with my partner.
		I remember things that are important to my partner.
		I don't flirt with anyone but my partner.
		I celebrate traditions that are important to my partner.
		I keep promises that I make to my partner.
		I try to make our time together special.
		I pay more attention to my partner's good qualities instead of things I don't like.
		I make a point of remembering the good times we have shared.
		I do not share my partner's secrets with other people.
		I do not share details of our relationship with other people.
		I speak kindly about my partner to other people.
		I make the effort to understand my partner's needs and dreams.
		I take time to think of ways I could make our relationship stronger.
		I let my partner know that I value our relationship.
		I tell my partner that I want our relationship to last.

For the things you already do well, what are some specific examples and times you have done these things?

For those things you would like to do better, what are some specific ways you could improve? What could you work on?

What are the things your partner does well? Share this with your partner.

***The grass grows greener....on the side of the fence you water the most.
Make choices that show your commitment to your relationship.***



Focus on Strengths



Meaningful relationships do not happen by accident. There are special things about your partner – things that were said and done – that made you feel good. Over time, these positive moments and experiences brought you together and defined your relationship. Remembering those moments helps keep the relationship moving forward.

Every relationship also has its tough times. Remembering the special things that brought you together can help you move through those struggles. But sometimes it is hard to remember the good times when we don't stop to think about them. By making an effort to regularly think about the good times (and talk about them with your partner), it makes it easier to remember them during tough times.

Take a moment now to think about your partner and your relationship. How would you answer the questions below?

- What did you like best about your partner when you first met?
- What do you currently like best about your partner?
- How does your partner show his/her love for you?
- What do you like best about your relationship with your partner?
- Why did you choose this person to be with?

What would help you remember the positives?

Some couples keep a journal and write their thoughts and experiences so they can read them later. Other couples prefer to keep photos or something from their experience together that they can hold and look at later. Find ways that you and your partner can remember and cherish the good times in your relationship. Make time during special occasions, like birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays to talk about those positive moments.

Couples that focus on the good in each other and remember the positive moments in their relationship are more likely to be happy and satisfied with their relationship.