

**Emotional abuse** can involve extreme jealousy and possessiveness. Your partner may put you down, humiliate you, or try to control what you feel, think, what you 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 sexual things that you don't want to do through force, pressure or manipulation, 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 or calling you names to put you down, or making negative comments about how you look or your abilities.

#### What does an abusive relationship feel like?

*"I feel I have to watch what I say and do all the time, otherwise he hits the roof and gets really nasty"*

*"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"*

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.

Remember 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 caring, and help is available.

#### Bullying

People who use anger to get their own way are bullies. A bully can be anyone – a member of your family, your partner, someone your own age, a stranger or someone you thought was your friend. You should never have to do anything because you are afraid of someone - everyone has the right to feel safe.

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 is 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 happy, healthy and honest relationships.



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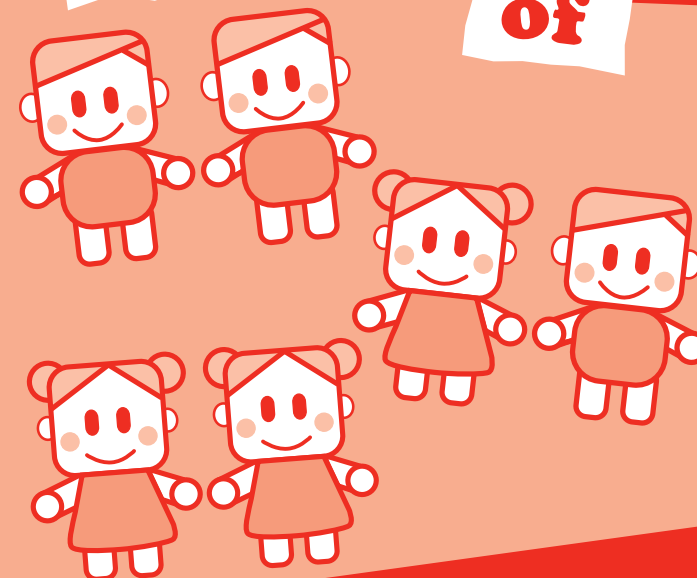
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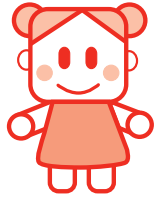
# The Ins and Outs of



# Relationships



## What is a relationship?



There are lots of different kinds of relationships. People have relationships with their friends, parents, siblings and boyfriends and girlfriends, to name a few. All of these relationships mean different things to different people.

While a lot of young people want to have a relationship with another girl or guy, you shouldn't be in any hurry. Knowing what you want from a relationship isn't easy at first - 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. 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.

*"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"*

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

Only you can decide if you want a relationship. Not everyone wants to be in one - you may feel being single gives you more freedom to do what you want and be independent, and that's OK. It's important to spend time getting to know yourself - think about what you want in life and enjoy your own company. Understanding yourself will help you to understand your relationships with others.

## Who do I like?

Being attracted to people of the same sex is as natural as being attracted to people of the opposite sex. 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"*

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

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

It takes time to know who you are - it's OK to question your sexuality and it's OK to be unsure. 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.

Working out who you are attracted to can be a confusing and challenging time. Remember that whatever you decide is OK, and that there are people you can talk to about your feelings.

*"I had lots of girlfriends at school, went out and had fun, then I had a crush on a guy. I felt really confused"*

Sometimes people in same-sex relationships are treated unfairly by others. Violence, discrimination and harassment towards anyone is against the law, regardless of their relationship.

## Other feelings

Some people don't feel that the sex they are born with fits with how they feel inside, and describe this as being 'trapped' in the body of the opposite sex. These people sometimes identify as being transgender. This can be confusing and difficult to understand for both yourself and others around you. Support groups and other counselling services are available.

## 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 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. 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, remember you're OK and that 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.

*"A while back my best mate Stuart tried to crack onto me. At first I was really pissed off, I ignored him for a month, I couldn't stand him being near me. When Stuart got off with Jon, I realised he was still my mate, and what was I frightened of? He asked, I said no, and that was OK."*

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 or partners, but be aware of giving out your personal details over the internet, such as where you live and your phone number. 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:

- Being open and honest with each other
- When disagreeing, listening to one another, sometimes agreeing to disagree
- Spending time together as well as apart
- Even when it's difficult, talking to one another, or when it's really tough try writing to one another
- Talking to others who have been in a relationship longer than you

## 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 - it's OK to take your time deciding. Being in a happy, 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.

If you do decide to have sex, always be safe and use condoms and dams to reduce the risk of getting or passing on a sexually transmissible infection (a dam is a latex square held over the vaginal or anal area during oral sex). Talk about safe sex early on with your partner, before the heat of the moment.

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.

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

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

## Am I old enough to have sex?

The legal age to have sex in WA is 16 years old (this age varies between States). This applies to both guys and girls, regardless of who you are attracted to.

Remember, for sex to be legal, both partners must always consent - this means that you must both want to do it. Forcing someone to have sex against their will is a crime, and so is taking advantage of someone if they've been taking drugs or drinking.

Laws around under-age sex apply to everyone, regardless of their gender. If you are under the age of 13, no one is allowed to have sex with you (even if you say yes). If you are under the age of 18, a person is not allowed to have sex with you if you are under their care, supervision or authority (even if you consent) eg a teacher or youth worker. For more information about age of consent contact Youth Legal Service (Inc) WA.

## Bad relationships

Most relationships are good relationships, but sometimes they can be bad.

### Abusive relationships

Abusive relationships are where one person intimidates the other to get them to do what they want. People, especially young people, don't always realise they are in an abusive relationship.

Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual. No one deserves violence or abuse. Be aware for these danger signs:

