

Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit
10 Hospital Drive
Peterborough, ON K9J 8M1
(705) 743-1000, ext. 391
www.pcchu.ca



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sexual Health Team at the Health Unit Offers Tips for Healthy Relationships

Thursday, February 11, 2010, Peterborough

With Valentine's Day around the corner, the Sexual Health Team at the Peterborough County-City Health Unit offers the following pointers on healthy relationships.

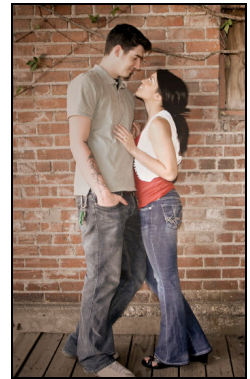
"All relationships are different, but healthy relationships share at least five things in common," said Ruth Walker, Public Health Nurse with the Sexual Health Program at the Health Unit. "These are known as the S.H.A.R.E. qualities which stand for safety, honesty, acceptance, respect and enjoyment. If someone believes their relationship isn't built on these basic components, there's a good chance they may be in an unhealthy relationship."

Ms. Walker explained that people in a healthy relationship should be able to work through conflicts together, and express themselves without fear of ridicule. Both partners should contribute equally and support each other's goals and interests. "It is important that you each feel good about yourself and that you think highly of one another. A relationship is healthy when it's enjoyable and comfortable for both people. Honesty and trust are also key ingredients," she added.

Warning signs that a relationship is not healthy include jealousy, possessiveness, and threats, as well as one partner being pressured to do things she or he may not feel comfortable with. Serious indications of an abusive relationship include physical abuse, sexual abuse, and forced isolation of the abused partner. "Unfortunately, unhealthy or abusive relationships are more common than most people think," said Ms. Walker. "Statistics show that over 50% of Canadian women experience at least one incident of physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime."

The Health Unit advises those looking for help with an unhealthy relationship to contact the YWCA Crisis Line at 1-800-461-7656 which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a

Tips for Safer Dating:



- Tell someone where you're going and with whom.
- Meet in public places for the first few dates.
- Have transportation or money for the bus, taxi and phone.
- Be able to call a taxi: know the address of where you are.
- Do what you can to avoid date rape. Take precautions and give clear messages.
- Have a safety plan.
- Avoid alcohol and never leave your drink unattended.
- Pay your own way: be independent.
- Get to know your date. Are your date's values similar to yours?
- In a long term dating situation, keep in touch with your family and friends.
- Trust your instincts.

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week to provide counseling, legal assistance, and shelter if necessary. In addition, the Kids Help Phone is recommended for teens with relationship questions, and can be reached 24 hours a day at 1-800-668-6868.

S.H.A.R.E. Qualities of Healthy Relationships:

- Safety:** In a healthy relationship, you feel safe. You don't have to worry that your partner will harm you physically or emotionally, and you aren't tempted to harm them. You can change your mind about something - like having sex - without being afraid of how your partner will respond.
- Honesty:** You don't hide anything important from your partner, and can say what you think without fear of being ridiculed. You can admit to being wrong, and you resolve disagreements by talking honestly.
- Acceptance:** You accept each other as you are. You appreciate your partner's unique qualities, such as shyness or spaceyness, and don't try to "fix" them. If you don't like your partner's qualities, you shouldn't be with that person.
- Respect:** You think highly of each other. You do not feel superior or inferior to your partner in important ways. You respect each other's right to have separate opinions and ideas.
- Enjoyment:** A good relationship is not just about how two people treat each other – it also has to be enjoyable. (If it's not enjoyable, why bother?) In a healthy relationship, you feel energized and alive in your partner's presence. You can play and laugh together. You have fun.

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For further information, please contact:

Brittany Cadence
Communications Officer
(705) 743-1000, ext. 391