

love is
respect

Respect That

love is respect | Action Guide

2025
TDVAM

Respect That

Our 2025 theme for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM), **Respect That**, is a powerful concept that can transform relationships. Respecting someone isn't just a vague idea; it's action and a mindset. We want to highlight the importance of treating partners with dignity, listening to their viewpoints, respecting their boundaries, and valuing their autonomy by focusing on 'respect'.

This guide includes:

- Respect in a relationship
- Respecting differences
- Addressing stigma
- Identifying disrespectful behavior



A Message From Our Director

Embracing who you are and making choices that reflect your true self is not only fulfilling but vital to having the life and relationships you deserve. Knowing your worth and recognizing that your individuality adds something special to the world is essential. You might find yourself exploring paths or interests that transcend traditional expectations in your relationships, and that is something to celebrate loudly! Your courage to be unapologetic and authentic in a world that sometimes tries to put us into predefined and limiting boxes is truly inspiring. I support and admire your resilience and courage to be heard and seen. I want you to remember that demanding respect is not defined by others or societal norms. Instead, it is defined by how you see yourself and show up in your relationships. **“Respect That”** and we will always support your journey!

- Angela Lee



A Note from Alexis Smith 2024 Miss Kansas

We all can reclaim respect for ourselves and others. The glamour of being Miss Kansas is using my platform as an empowerment tool for women and girls and the opportunity to take my power back from an abusive relationship. Love is respect amplifies my transition to becoming a strong advocate and leader for our community. I am honored to reflect and transcend my adversity to help others understand how to identify healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships. In all facets of life, we all can take a stand and cherish the opportunities to represent healthy relationships. There is beauty, growth, and passion behind understanding what respect means to you. Through every conversation, you have the power to use your voice, knowledge, and awareness to save lives and change the world. Empower and embody the life you deserve.

- Alexis Smith

Is your relationship healthy?

It's possible that you or someone you know may not be aware of unhealthy or even abusive behaviors in your relationship. Take the first step towards awareness by [taking this quiz.](#)



Respect In a Relationship



It is important for both partners to communicate openly and honestly about their feelings in a **healthy relationship**. This is so neither of them has “authority” over the other. By doing so, mutual respect is fostered, and misunderstandings or conflicts are prevented from escalating. Healthy and loving relationships can happen when respect is a cornerstone and that is when trust and emotional safety thrive. Respect is not just a nice to have in relationships; it’s vital to preventing dating abuse. Remember, by promoting equality and valuing each other’s perspectives, respectful relationships create a safe, valued, and empowered environment for everyone. You can show respect in your relationship in **three important ways**.

1. Respect Boundaries

You have the right to build and establish healthy **boundaries**. Depending on the nature of the relationship, that may be easier said than done. Boundaries help define what you are comfortable with and how you want to be treated by others. They allow you to honor your needs, goals, feelings, and values. Boundaries can be **emotional, physical, and even digital**.

Healthy Boundaries:

- ✓ I am cool with following each other on social media, but not sharing passwords.
- ✓ I am comfortable kissing and holding hands, but not in public right now.
- ✓ I am okay with texting occasionally, but not constantly.
- ✓ I am comfortable with some touching, but I am not ready to have sex.

Unhealthy Boundaries:

- ✗ I need to know where you are always.
- ✗ If you love me, you won’t spend time with other people.
- ✗ I need you to stop talking to other guys or girls because you might cheat, and I get jealous.
- ✗ I can’t stand to see you struggling like this, so I need to help you change.



Katja M.
Youth Council Member

Setting and keeping boundaries will be your first line of protection and prevention from unhealthy and abusive relationships. A boundary is something you establish for the way others will treat you and what you will and won’t accept. When we set and follow through with our boundaries, we increase our self-love, self-awareness, and self-respect. A boundary is not a punishment for the other person; it is a method of keeping yourself safe and clearly communicating your needs. Set clear and healthy boundaries and expectations, so that you and those you are in relationships with can #RespectThat.



2. Respect Levels of Consent

Healthy relationships **allow partners** to communicate openly and to agree on what activities they want to pursue. Whether it is holding hands, kissing, touching, sex, or anything else, it is important for all partners in a relationship to feel comfortable with what is happening **every time**.

Consent means respecting boundaries and never making assumptions. Consent should be clear, enthusiastic, and freely given. When practicing consent, here are some flags you should know:

Practicing Consent

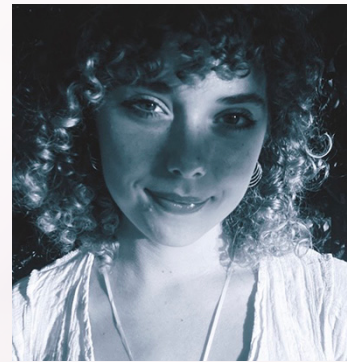
Green flags indicating that your partner respects consent include:

- 👉 Is this, okay?
- 👉 Do you want to slow down?
- 👉 Do you want to go further?
- 👉 Should I stop?

Red flags that suggest your partner is not respecting consent include:

- 👉 Pressuring you to do things you do not want to do.
- 👉 Saying that you “owe” them something (i.e., material items, sexual acts, etc.) because you are dating or they “did something” for you.
- 👉 Reacting with sadness, anger, or resentment if you do not consent to or do something.

Regardless of previous consent or actions, or if you’re in a committed or casual relationship, you should always get and be able to give consent. People have the right to stop any activity at any time, even if they have previously agreed to it. Consent is not just about sex; it is also about respecting boundaries and people’s feelings. It is a vital part of any healthy relationship.



Consent is a foundational concept in healthy relationships, sexual or not. Rather than thinking about consent as a detached agreement, we can think of it as a conversation embedded within a romantic or sexual experience. Reframing consent not just as a one-time exchange but as a thoughtful, engaged, and continuous conversation can create a sexual environment that allows for more flexibility, understanding, and RESPECT!

Maya M.
Youth Council Member



3. Engage In Respectful Communication

Growing up, you may have been told to keep your thoughts to yourself or that your feelings did not matter because of your age. These messages can lead to relationships where you fear sharing your thoughts or you feel unheard and unappreciated. You should be able to voice your concerns and needs without fear of harming the relationship. Healthy relationships require respect and communication. Make sure to speak your truth respectfully and listen to your partner's point of view. Together, you can find a solution that works for both of you.



Scenario #1: You are in a relationship, and your partner often cancels plans at the last minute, making you feel unimportant.

Possible Response: *“I’ve noticed we’ve had to cancel plans a lot lately, and it makes me feel a certain way. Can we talk about it?”*

This response acknowledges the problem but opens space for honest conversation, which shows that your feelings and needs are respected and valued.

Scenario #2: You are in a relationship, and you often text or call your partner, but notice they take a long time to respond.

Possible Response: *“I’ve noticed that you take a long time to respond to me when I text or call. Can we talk about it?”*

This response acknowledges the problem but offers room for a productive and honest conversation about each partner's needs and expectations. This shows respect and appreciation for your feelings and time.

Why Is Respect Important in A Relationship?

- **Builds Trust:** Respect fosters trust and emotional safety in relationships.
- **Promotes Equality:** It ensures that both partners have equal say and value in the relationship.
- **Supports Well-Being:** Respect contributes to emotional well-being and self-esteem.



Respecting Differences

We all play a part in fostering healthy relationships and preventing dating abuse. Recognizing that you, your friends, and your peers may have overlapping identities—such as race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status—helps us appreciate individuals' diverse experiences and challenges. This awareness is based on respect and understanding how aspects of identity influence how people experience and perceive relationships. So, let's address some myths and stigma that can affect your relationship:



Stigma #1: Men are dominant, and women are submissive.

The Reality: It is important to challenge stereotypes that promote dominance in relationships. In many societies, those who identify as male are expected to dominate, which creates an unhealthy power dynamic. This can lead to abusive actions or behaviors, as the “dominant partner” might feel entitled to make decisions without considering their partner’s needs or opinions.

Stigma #2: Couples must always agree.

The Reality: The belief that couples must always agree suppresses each partner’s viewpoints and desires. This can hinder communication and lead to frustration, bitterness, and a lack of mutual respect. Remember, conflict exists in all relationships, and healthy conflict is a good thing to bring resolve.

Stigma #3: Jealously means your partner loves you.

The Reality: Believing that jealousy signifies love or passion can sometimes result in controlling tendencies. In relationships, individuals may feel justified in tracking each other’s activities, demanding you to stop seeing people, intruding on privacy, or limiting freedom under the facade of concern. This is not okay.



Promoting Inclusivity

We must create a culture of respect and understanding regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. Understanding cultural, gender and sexual orientation differences impacts dating violence prevention strategies. It promotes awareness and empowers you and your peers to advocate for yourself, breaking down barriers. Here are some ways you can [support](#) each other:

- Ask your partner what they need from a relationship.
- Listen to understand, not to respond.
- Try to be more curious than judgmental.
- You may not always share the same opinions, but you can still respect your partner's viewpoints.
- Celebrate each other and support the right to individual activities and achievements.



Disrespect Harms Relationships

Disrespectful behavior can happen in any relationship, whether with someone we are dating, a friend, classmate, or a family member. Often, our idea of what is disrespectful can be influenced by unrealistic expectations about our relationships, as well as feelings of jealousy, possessiveness, or insecurity. All these factors can contribute to unhealthy or abusive behavior. Knowing the types of abuse and common signs of abusive behaviors is essential to recognizing them. Here are some ways you can identify harmful behaviors:

Common Types of Relationship Abuse

- **Physical abuse**
- Emotional or verbal abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Technology facilitated abuse (digital abuse)
- Stalking

Disrespectful or Abusive Behavior

- Touching any part of you without your consent.
- Calling you names or putting you down.
- Telling you what to do or what to wear.
- Pressuring you to have sex or perform sexual acts.
- Using social media or other technology to track your location or activities.

Remember: No one deserves abuse in any form and every type of abuse is harmful and serious. If you or someone you know is experiencing relationship abuse, love is respect advocates are available 24/7 via phone, chat, or text to discuss your situation, identify next steps, and support you in making the decision that's best for you.



love is respect is here for you.

love is respect is a safe, inclusive space where teens and young adults can access information and get support in an environment designed specifically for them.



1.866.331.9474



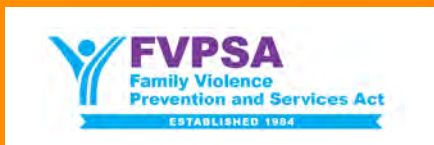
loveisrespect.org



Text LOVEIS to 22522



A project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, love is respect offers 24/7 information, support, and advocacy to young people ages 13–26 who have questions or concerns about their romantic relationships.



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