



FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Military Families Learning Network

On Solid Ground: Exploring Strategies to Help
Clients Create and Maintain Healthy
Relationships

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U.S. DEPARTMENT
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Today's Presenter

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- Director of Training for National Domestic Violence Hotline
- Facilitates trainings on healthy relationships, intimate partner violence, and culturally responsive practice.



Learning Objectives

- Learn characteristics of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships
- Identify clues that a healthy relationships discussion is appropriate for a client's situation
- Explore best practices for facilitating healthy relationship conversations

Everyone has the right to be in a **safe** and **healthy** relationship



What distinguishes the space
between **healthy** and **unhealthy**
and
unhealthy and **abusive**?



Opportunity for
skill development



The relationship is fundamentally unequal.
One partner has an unhealthy mindset.
One partner has more power/control



HEALTHY

UNHEALTHY

ABUSIVE

Best Practices

Listen for where a client falls on
The healthy relationship spectrum



Best Practices

Practice

Initiating the conversation
without judgement

Implementation

Utilize open-ended questions
To learn more about the situation

Can you tell me more about your relationship?

Has anything happened recently you are concerned about?

What I'm hearing is... can you tell me more about your experience?

Can you tell me the root of why you feel this way?

Best Practices

Practice

Meet your client where they are

Implementation

Use strategic questions to learn their perspective

Can you tell me more about what communication looks like in your relationship?

What does respect mean to you?

I'm hearing equality is more important to you... can you tell me more about that?

From what you've shared, trust is a significant value in your relationship. What does trust look like?

Best Practices

Practice

Create opportunities to discuss healthy relationship dynamics

Implementation

Initiate discussion around concerning behaviors

What would it be like for you to talk to your partner about this issue?

If you've been upset about something in the past, have you felt comfortable talking with them?

Is there something that happened prior to this experience that you feel might be related or causing this behavior?

What makes you feel you can't talk with your partner about this behavior?

Best Practices

Practice

Provide strategic education regarding healthy relationship dynamics, followed by assessment

Implementation

Focus on the following key areas:



Healthy Relationship Dynamics

Advocate: Part of being in a healthy relationship is respecting your partner for who they are. It sounds like that has been hard for you with this particular topic. What have you thought about doing moving forward?

Advocate: A healthy relationship is one where both partners have an equal say in how money is spent, or both are equally aware of how money is spent. From what you've shared it sounds like your partner is withholding some important financial information. What have your conversations looked like around this issue?

Consent and Boundaries

Advocate: "Hooking up should be a fun experience for both of you, and I hear how confusing it feels that you hooked up and then he's been distant since you last communicated. How are you feeling about the relationship now?"

Advocate: "Although it can actually be very healthy to refrain from texting very frequently or constantly, it's also important that your partner give you the space to communicate openly about your feelings, especially if you are feeling concerned about how things are going."

Boundaries

Advocate: “Everyone has the right to set their boundaries and set their expectations around personal space and privacy within any relationship. What does it look like when you negotiate those boundaries in your relationship?”

Advocate: “If that is a choice you want to make that is completely understandable, and he should respect that choice. Do you have any concerns about discussing this boundary with your partner?”

CASE STUDY

Michelle and Eric

- Michelle (30) and Eric (32) are married
- Two children- Bryce (3) and Eli (6)
- Eric-in the Army
- Several deployments and moves over 12 years
- Michelle started seeing therapist last month for anxiety
- When problems arise, she wants to talk about the issues but Eric does not
- Michelle feels like she doesn't have a network anymore because of their moves
- During deployments, very little communication with each other. Communication is limited to issues about the kids and big financial decisions
- Michelle feels like she is not connected to Eric anymore
- She wants to bring the intimacy back into the relationship

What is the first fundamental step in facilitating a healthy relationship conversation?

CASE STUDY

There are a few different windows of opportunity in which Michelle has shared that we could use to ask open-ended questions to ultimately collect our much needed context. What are some of those windows of opportunity?

CASE STUDY

Now that we have identified a few different opportunities to initiate conversation about healthy relationships, what are some examples of open ended questions we could ask to learn more about the windows of opportunity we have identified?

CASE STUDY

Lillian and Jordan

- Lillian (41) and Jordan (45)- Together for 3 years
- Both retired military
- Living together in Washington state with Lillian's two children full time
- Jordan moved from Alabama (away from his 2 children) to Washington for new job
- Jordan sees his children for two weeks in the summer only
- Lillian is in school full time and has a part time job
- Jordan lost his job 6 months ago
- Last few months have been very stressful for the household
- Jordan recently started working with a case manager through the VA to find resources for financial assistance and/or job placement
- Jordan discloses that things at home have been really tough

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CASE STUDY

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Quick Quiz

When we ask open-ended questions, what should we Specifically be listening for (to help us facilitate healthy relationship conversation)?

HINT: 4 IMPORTANT THINGS TO LISTEN FOR!

Quick Quiz

1. Where someone falls on HR spectrum
2. Any concerning behaviors
3. Clients' perspective on healthy relationship characteristics
4. Clients' priority to focus on education provided

Best Practices

Practice

Share healthy relationship resources

Implementation

Examples include...



www.thehotline.org | loveisrespect.org



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Family Development Upcoming Event

ABCs of LGBT: Learning Language and Inclusive Practices in Work with LGBT Families

- Date: April 13, 2017
- Time: 11:00 am Eastern
- Location: *<https://learn.extension.org/events/3008>*

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