



## Is This Relationship Healthy?

*“She doesn’t understand why I can’t spend more time with her.”*

*“He doesn’t see how important my graduate work is to me.”*

*“Things are so bad at home that I am on edge all the time.”*

When the people closest to you don’t understand, support or respect your educational pursuits, what can you do?

Relationship problems can be a major source of stress for graduate and professional students. For some, the situation

becomes so difficult to manage that they drop out of school. Others put all relationships on hold during school and then find they have no support system when a crisis hits. Learning when to stay in a relationship, how to resolve conflicts and when to move on can be some of the most difficult lessons to learn during this time in your life.

“When two people find they just can’t compromise no matter what, it’s often because their conflict involves issues that are much deeper than they initially recognize,” says relationship expert and author John M. Gottman, Ph.D. in “The Relationship Cure.”

Graduate and professional students may find themselves at odds with a spouse or partner because of differences in emotional maturity. Failure to set appropriate boundaries is a common

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Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students

problem as well, says licensed mental health counselor Patricia N. Alexander, Ph.D.

Alexander says she asks clients to consider the answer to one basic question to determine whether they are in a healthy relationship. “I suggest they ask themselves, ‘Does this relationship enhance or diminish my life?’ Sometimes the answer can be a

real wake-up call. If a relationship doesn’t enhance your life, you may want to take a serious look at whether you should stay in it.”

Getting out of an unhealthy relationship is the topic of “Bailing Out,” coauthored by Elena Oumano, Ph.D. and Barry Lubetkin, Ph.D.

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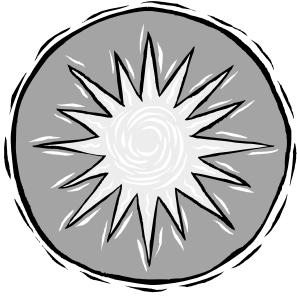
## Setting Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries or limits can be physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual. Any of the following may be signs that you do not have adequate boundaries in place:

- You always say “yes” when someone asks you to do something, even if you don’t feel like it.
- Often putting others’ needs before your own.
- Putting up with verbal and emotional abuse.
- Allowing yourself to be manipulated by another’s moods.
- Feeling hurt and angry when someone treats you a certain way.
- Being taken for granted.
- Allowing someone to physically abuse you.

Saying “no” to unreasonable demands and behavior is a good first step in setting boundaries. Clearly defining what is and what is not acceptable can raise your self-esteem and help you stay focused on your educational goals.

*Source: author and counselor Lynette Rees*



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## *Healthy Relationships*

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“Younger people tend to be unaware of the emotional factors that drive their decisions and affect who they fall in love with,” notes Oumano, a professor of communications. “They tend to not recognize that their relationship patterns can often be based on family dynamics that were established when they were quite young.”

“Many young people tend to pick people for more superficial reasons, like looks, excitement factor, or beating out the competition to get that person, rather than seek out someone who could be a true best friend and partner,” says Oumano.

“The characteristics for a healthy relationship of any kind - friendship or romantic - are openness, generosity, loyalty, commonality and

kindness,” she continues. “That level of support from anyone - family, friends, romantic partners - affirms your sense of worth and can help give you the confidence to succeed. The only difference between a close friendship and romance is sexual attraction and intimacy, which does raise the emotional stakes, but if you’re with the right person, it’s that much more fulfilling.” ■

### **Resources**

- “Bailing Out: The Sane Way to Get Out of a Doomed Relationship and Survive with Hope and Self-Respect,” Barry Lubetkin, Ph.D. and Elena Oumano, Ph.D. (Fireside, 1991)
- “The Relationship Cure: A 5-Step Guide for Building Better Connections with Family, Friends, and Lovers,” John M. Gottman, Ph.D. and Joan DeClaire (Crown Publishers, 2001)
- “Addictive Relationships: Reclaiming Your Boundaries,” Joy Miller (Health Communications, Inc., 1989)

## *Good Financial Habits for Students*

Jeffrey E. Hanson, director of borrower education for Access Group, Inc. suggests these financial habits that can help you realize your financial goals and fulfill your educational and professional dreams.

- Identify your goals (personal, professional and financial) and write them down. Develop strategies for achieving those goals and reassess them periodically.
- Develop a monthly budget plan that you can afford and stick to it. Live below your means and learn to stretch your dollars while in school, so that you can afford to live the lifestyle you want once you graduate.
- Save what you can each month once you graduate (even if it’s only \$20), so that you’ll have funds available for emergencies.
- Keep accurate, well-organized records of your financial activities.
- Establish and maintain a strong credit history; review your credit report at no cost every 12 months at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).
- Pay your bills so they are received by the due date.
- Borrow the minimum amount you need and repay all that you borrow.
- Pay your credit card balance in full each month. Charge only what you know you can repay when the bill arrives. ■