
S1C9. Healthy and unhealthy relationships

Relationships are not always healthy. An unhealthy relationship does not necessarily indicate the presence of ROCD. You need to have a correct assessment about your relationship rather than diagnose it as ROCD. If you are in an unhealthy relationship, neither this course book, nor any other book, nor chapter, nor blog, nor podcast on ROCD will be of any use. If you suspect that you have ROCD, get an OCD expert to confirm the diagnosis. Once again, read this chapter with your partner so that both of you can get a better understanding.

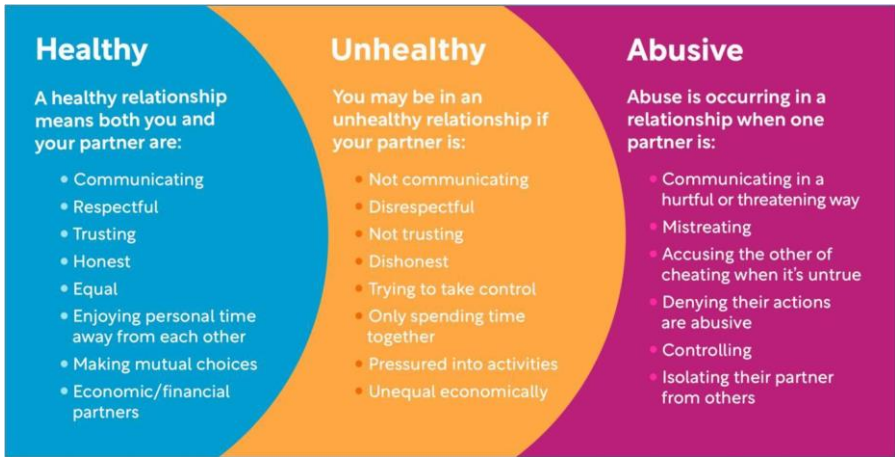
Everyone expects that his relationship will be healthy and happy, but unfortunately that is not always the case. Relationships are often unhealthy and sometimes, even abusive. According to estimates, 9% to 38% of young couples could be in unhealthy relationships (González-Ortega et al., 2008) and 35% of women worldwide may have experienced abuse and violence in relationships (World Health Organization, 2017). Through this chapter, I attempt to illustrate the differences to reduce the ambiguity about ROCD.

The relationship spectrum one-page handout, downloadable on www.loveisrespect.org, is a quick-read on the topic. It is available on their website and the link is provided at the end of this chapter. Additionally, www.loveisrespect.org also explains how on parameters such as communication, respect, trust, honesty, equality and personal time, a relationship can be classified as healthy, unhealthy or abusive as shown in figure 1.9.1.

You need to evaluate your relationship at least on these parameters. If you find your partner to be abusive, you may need to end the relationship or seek help. If your relationship is unhealthy, you can work towards improving it by working on the parameters. Many a time, in unhealthy relationships, the abuser is not even aware of his toxic behavior because of being too self-absorbed (Brown, 2017). Hence, observe your own behavior from a third person point of view. If you find yourself guilty of any of the acts listed under unhealthy or abusive relationships, you need to evaluate your choices and seek help if you cannot control them.

In unhealthy and abusive relationships, whatever the abuser does to abuse is a choice. The person may not communicate, disrespect, not trust, lie, try to control by choice. In ROCD, however, you may understand that you should not be indulging in these actions but you don't seem to have a choice. In unhealthy or abusive relationships, the abuser may cheat, but in ROCD, you may think you want to but the thought causes anxiety. In unhealthy and abusive relationships, the dominant feeling may be frustration and anger, and intent to hurt or not care. In ROCD, the dominant feeling may be fear and anxiety and excessive care.

Figure 1.9.1: The relationship spectrum



Conflicts in relationships can be healthy and conflict resolution is a learned skill (Karam et al., 2015). One of the biggest mistakes people make in ROCD is to think that there can be no conflicts and that the relationship should always feel like a fairy-tale romance. That you should feel loved all the time and that you should feel attracted to your partner all the time. That if you don't feel loved enough by the partner or don't feel enough love towards the partner, there is something wrong.

If you are watching a romantic movie or even porn and if you think of someone else other than your partner, your ROCD brain may immediately latch on to either doubt about the appropriateness of the relationship or guilt about the inappropriateness of the thought. You may feel bad about fantasizing about other people, wishing to spend time with other people or even sharing a joke with other people.

These are just indicative of the differences between unhealthy relationships and ROCD. Make absolutely sure that you have ROCD before you choose to treat it as such. Read the toolkit for healthy relationships for a deeper understanding. Understanding the difference and working actively on areas of improvement can help strengthen a beautiful but shaky relationship.

In the next chapter we shall look at some of the warning signs of ROCD Type 1.

To-Do:

Download the relationship spectrum pdf from <https://t.ly/IWQq>