

# Sex and Healthy Relationships



In a healthy relationship, both parties are ready and feel comfortable with sexual activity. You shouldn't have to have sex to keep your boyfriend or girlfriend. You may feel comfortable kissing or holding hands, but not want to go any further. That's ok.

Deciding whether you want to have sex or when you should is a decision you should make when it feels right for YOU. In a healthy relationship, your boyfriend or girlfriend respects your decisions -- even when they don't like them.

If you are thinking about when to have sex, keep in mind:

- You should feel comfortable with your decision.
- Talk with your partner about safe sex practices, like getting tested for STIs and considering birth control options.
- Be honest with yourself and your partner. If you're not ready, that's ok and your partner should respect it.
- If something scares you or makes you feel uncomfortable, you can say no at any time.
- You have the right to talk openly and honestly about your fears, worries and feelings.
- If your partner tries to threaten or guilt you into having sex, it can be a sign of an unhealthy relationship. You deserve better.
- No matter how long you've been with someone or how many times you've done something, you have the right to say no at anytime for any reason.
- You have control over your body, and no one else has the right to tell you what to do with it.

## Why is It So Complicated?

Having sex can raise the intensity of emotions that people feel for each other -- whether you're in a serious or casual relationship. At times, this elevation is a good and enjoyable thing, but sometimes it makes a hard situation worse. It's important that you feel ready and confident in your decisions about having sex.

## What is Sexual Abuse?

Sexual abuse is any type of unwanted sexual contact. Forcing or pressuring someone to do something they don't want or don't consent to is sexual assault. No one should ever take advantage of you sexually when you are asleep, intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. This can be a very serious and dangerous form of abuse. Learn more about and what to do if you experience it by visiting [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org).

For more information, you can visit: [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

A white call-to-action box with a drop shadow. At the top, it says 'Connect NOW!' in orange. Below that is a green speech bubble icon with 'Live Chat @' inside. Underneath is the website 'www.loveisrespect.org'. At the bottom, there are two icons: a green speech bubble with 'loveis' and a green telephone icon. To the right of the telephone icon is the number '1-866-331-9474'. At the very bottom, in orange text, it says 'Discuss your options anonymously. Peer advocates are available 24/7.'

Repurposing is allowed and encouraged.

Please contact Break the Cycle or the National Dating Abuse Helpline for more information.