

Relationship Stages Guide

Boundaries Personal boundaries are the limits and rules that we set for ourselves and within our relationships. They reflect our comfort levels, preferences, habits, and values – who we are.

Healthy

You mostly feel safe and accepted because your boundaries are respected and supported.

Unhealthy

You often feel uncomfortable, annoyed or frustrated because your boundaries are pushed or ignored.

Abusive

You feel unsafe, scared or made to feel bad about yourself because your boundaries are crossed and controlled.

1. Initiating

Starting a relationship

You sit behind someone in your class and you really like them. You joke around in the class and they seem to respond well to you. You think about them outside of class. You want to hang out with them more, so you decide to...



OPTION 1

Ask them after class in the hallway if they would like to hang out that weekend.

Asking for consent like this is respectful and builds trust.

OPTION 2

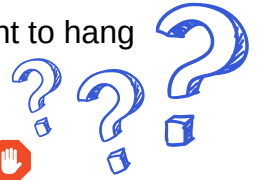
Arrange with some friends to deliver a bunch of flowers and a card to their next class to ask them out.

This can push a boundary and feel uncomfortable from embarrassment.

OPTION 3

Follow them home from school so you can ask them when their friends aren't around.

This can feel scary and is described as stalking.



2. Experimenting

Getting to know someone

They agree to go hang out with you and you both go to walk downtown and get food. You are having a good time and want to remember the moment, so you take your phone out to take a selfie of both of you. You...



OPTION 1

Ask them if they'd be okay being in your picture.

Asking for consent like this is respectful and builds trust.

OPTION 2

Take a picture of them when they aren't looking.

This can feel uncomfortable because they don't know what you'll do with that picture.

OPTION 3

Post a picture of you and them and tag them in it without telling them.

This can feel scary because you are controlling their public image.



3. Intensifying

Becoming more intimate

The relationship has been going steady for about a month. You like them more and more each week. They tell you that their parents are going to be out late on Saturday night and they said they could have one friend over. They ask you to come over and watch a movie together. About half way through the movie, you both are wrapped in a blanket and leaning on each other. You...

OPTION 1

Ask them if you can kiss them.

Asking for consent like this is respectful and builds trust.

OPTION 2

Try to inch your hands closer to their legs and body.

This can feel uncomfortable and puts them in a position to ask what you are doing or stop you.

OPTION 3

Put your arm around them, but they push you away. You put your arm back around them and kiss them.

Kissing someone without their consent is sexual assault.

4. Integrating

Merging your lives & routines



You've been dating now for about four months and things seem to be going well. You have plans to spend the evening with your partner and are both excited about taking more steps in physical intimacy. However, your grandmother was taken to the hospital. You and your mother decide to travel to see her this weekend because the doctors say she isn't doing well and she doesn't have much time left. Your mother says you can invite your partner to come along. You tell your partner that you have to cancel the weekend plans to visit your grandmother, but before you invite them to come along, your partner...

OPTION 1

Tells you to not worry about the weekend plans, wishes you a safe trip and encourages you to be there for your grandmother.

This is supportive because it shows respect for what is important to you.

OPTION 2

Gets really sad and asks if you can come over the next weekend. They don't mention your grandmother.

This can feel frustrating because they don't see how important family is to you.

OPTION 3

Accuses you of making it up as a way to get out of coming over and they ghost you all weekend.

You may feel bad about yourself because they don't trust you when you are being honest.

Relationships are built on **trust** and you build trust by **respecting** boundaries. Discover your boundaries so you can **communicate** what's important to you and ask for **consent** when you think you may be crossing another person's boundary.