

What Is a Healthy Relationship?

By: Kodee Walls, M.A.

One could say that our need to be with someone else is in our genes. For thousands of years, our very survival depended on our ability to come together. We stand a better chance of surviving if we can protect one another. As technology becomes an even bigger part of our lives, we still reach out to others. How many times have you searched for someone on Facebook from grade school to friend-request? How often do you send a text-message to your loved one just to tell him or her "I love you"?

The bottom line is that we all want to connect with others; people who understand us and support us, no matter how many problems or how much baggage we have. But how do we balance that need to belong, and in some cases be loved, within healthy relationships?

This balancing act can be tricky. We can all think of someone in our lives who stays in a relationship when we don't think their partner is good for them. What reasons have you heard that person use? Maybe things like, "I can't help it, I

love him so much!" or "Most of the time she makes me feel like no one else ever has!" or "But she's my mom!" Maybe we have even said these things to ourselves.

Regardless of the type of relationship—romantic or family—there are signs to

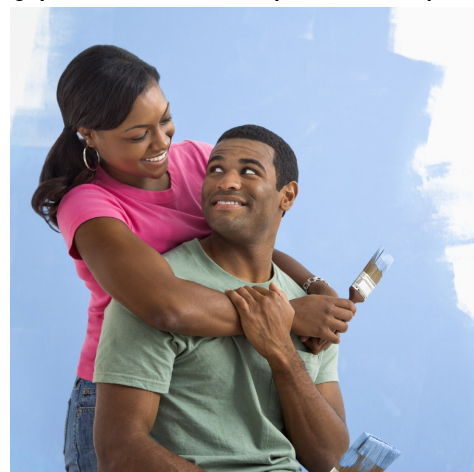


look for to let you know if your relationship is healthy. These signs of a healthy relationship include shared flexibility, support, and respect. We feel good about these relationships because they keep us safe and help us make good choices. They also give us support in times of need.

Not so healthy relationships tend to make us feel the opposite of the healthy relationships described above. We are afraid of the reaction another person may have, so we keep our problems to ourselves. We might lie to protect ourselves from the our

partner's reactions. Warning signs of unhealthy relationships may include hurtful comments, unwanted touching of any kind, or lack of respect for things we need. Many times an unhealthy relationship is not healthy from the beginning. It easy to recognize an unhealthy relationship, but that does not mean it is easy to get out of an unhealthy relationship.

Right now you may be asking yourself, "Am I in a healthy relationship?" One way to know is to look at the level of respect. Respect in relationships means that each person values the other person. But remember that you, yourself must also respect your thoughts and feelings. This will help you set limits for yourself so you can feel safe and comfortable in relationships. If something makes you feel sick to your stomach when you think about doing it, listen to that feeling and trust yourself. It may be your way of keeping yourself safe in any relationship.



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Monthly Guidance

Dear MG,

My boyfriend and I aren't getting along at all. We get into a lot of arguments, and sometimes he gets angry and hits me. He tells me it's my fault for provoking him. Later, he apologizes and swears that it won't happen again. I know what he's doing is wrong, but I feel like I have no options. I don't have a job right now and we have a toddler together. I can't support myself and a child without his help. What should I do?

Sincerely,
Trapped

Dear Trapped,

What you are describing is an abusive relationship. Unfortunately, your story is all too common. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, one in four women will become a victim of domestic violence during her lifetime. Often, men who abuse women also become violent towards children in the family. This situation sounds extremely dangerous for you and your son.

I know you feel helpless right now, but I want you to know that there are organizations and places nearby that can help you. Here are some steps you might consider taking:

- Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-787-3224 TTY). You can talk to a supportive person who will help you to explore your options.
- Call the crisis line for A Better Way at 765-288-HELP. A Better Way is a local domestic violence shelter for women and children.
- Move to a shelter. Shelters like A Better Way are in secure locations to prevent an angry partner from finding you. They will provide for your basic needs for up to 45 days. A counselor is available to help you plan your move to avoid conflict with your boyfriend. If needed, they can help you to find transitional housing while you try to find a job or even get training for a new career.
- Find a support group. Organizations like A Better Way

and community mental health centers in our area offer support groups where you can connect with other women who are survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

- Whatever you decide to do, remember that you aren't alone. Even if you just need someone to talk to, please call one of the crisis lines listed above.

Monthly Guidance [MG] answers questions about relationships and personal issues. If you would like to ask MG a question, call the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic and leave an anonymous message for MG. Or, you may send your question in writing to the address on the back page of this newsletter. If you choose to ask MG a question, your identity will remain completely anonymous. Please keep in mind when writing your questions that space is limited.

Due to time constraints, MG cannot answer all questions, but will try to choose questions that are representative of a broad range of issues. If your question does not get answered and you would like to discuss it, please call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.

Please be advised that MG is neither a crisis/emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.

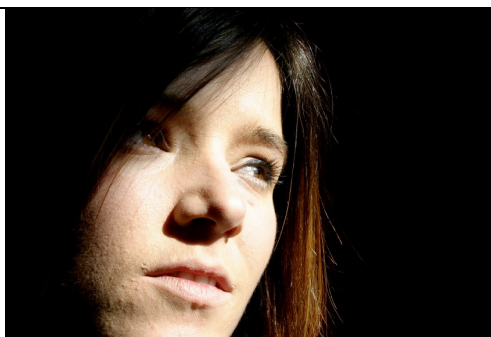
Featured Mental Health Issue: When Is Shyness A Problem?

By: Laura Walker, M.A.

Many of the articles in this edition of *Mind Matters* focus on maintaining healthy relationships. But what about those who find it difficult to initiate relationships in the first place?

Anxiety and shyness in social situations can be crippling. When meeting new people, you may blush, have difficulty talking, or notice that your palms are sweating. You might be so worried about what others are thinking of you that it is difficult to concentrate on what you would like to say to them. Anxiety like this can make it difficult to engage in basic social activities, like meeting new friends, going to parties, interviewing for jobs, or even using public restrooms!

Does the last paragraph seem to describe you? If so, you're not alone.



According to the National Institute of Mental Health, an estimated 21 million Americans suffer from severe anxiety in social situations. This type of anxiety is different from shyness because keeps you from participating in social events in a variety of situations, such as work, school, or even family get-togethers.

Although anxiety like this may leave you feeling lonely and isolated, there are many ways that you can seek help to improve your

confidence and feel more comfortable with others. Therapists like those at the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic are trained in these methods. For example, cognitive behavioral therapy can help you to change the thoughts that you have about social situations so that you feel less self-conscious. You can gradually work your way up from interactions with one or two people to more frightening situations, like parties. Therapists can also help you to practice social skills and role-play how you will react in situations that make you nervous. According to the American Psychological Association, anti-anxiety and antidepressant medications can also sometimes help with social anxiety.

If you struggle with painful shyness, it may be terrifying for you to even think about picking up the phone to tell someone about your problems. However, calling a trained professional may be the first step on your journey to a happier, more fulfilling life.

Featured Youth Issue:

The Caring Arts Program: Be A STAR

By: Ryan Hess, M.A.

Are you having difficulty getting your children to listen to you? Are you at your wits end because your kids are disobedient? If this is the case, then let me introduce you to a parenting technique that has been proven to increase responsiveness.



Be a STAR is a behavior modification strategy designed to help your child learn self control and problem solving skills. The philosophy is simple: when children are engaging in an unwanted behavior, the parent coaches them to be a STAR (Stop, Think, Act, Review) when making choices. The child will first Stop what they are doing and then Think about their behavior choices—both positive and negative. They are then encouraged to Act on one of the positive choices. Finally, they are asked to Review what happened and if things did not turn out the way they had hoped, they start the process over. If after 3 attempts to correct the behavior, then it's "3 strikes and you're out" and they receive a punishment (that they were warned was coming after the first try). If they made a positive choice then they get a reward.

Children do not have the mental speed that adults do, and so this

process gives them the additional time they need to change their problem behavior. This technique is especially effective for children with developmental delays, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Johnny is a 9 year-old boy who loves playing with his toy cars. His bedtime has now come but Johnny doesn't want to stop playing with his cars. His mother has asked him once nicely to put them away and go to bed. Johnny doesn't acknowledge her request and continues to play with the cars. Johnny's mother walks over to where Johnny is playing and makes eye contact with him. Mom may need to touch Johnny to make sure he's paying attention and knows she is serious. She then says, "Johnny, I asked you to put the toys away and go to bed. Now I need you to be a STAR, first STOP what you are doing".

The key to the STAR program's effectiveness is that the parent must be consistent with consequences



after the Act step. No matter how much the child complains, pleads, or cries, consequences need to be enforced. Consequences can either be earning a reward (praise and positive attention from parents works best) or punishment in the form of lost privileges. This consistency teaches the child that the parent is an authority figure who is consistent, predictable, and honest.

The STAR program is just one of many behavior modification techniques used in our Caring Arts Program. This outreach program is offered through the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic. The program serves children with special needs who are between the ages of 6-13. Caring Arts meets every other Saturday and is packed with art, music, and movement activities designed to help the children develop social skills and emotional control techniques in a playful environment. It also provides a 3 hour break for parents and caregivers. If this sounds like a program that might be helpful for your family, please call the clinic.

Featured Counselor Profile

Desiree Howell, M.A.

By: Laura Walker, M.A.

This column is a way for the community to learn about the diverse talents, both master's and doctoral students, employed at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic.

Desiree Howell received her M.A. in counseling psychology from Ball State University and is currently a third-year doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services. Desiree is currently seeing clients at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic. The following is a discussion with Desiree, one of the many talented individuals employed at the Ball State University Practicum Clinic.

How did you decide to pursue your PhD in Counseling Psychology?

My master's degree internship experience at the Ball State Counseling Center was amazing. After experiencing aspects of counseling center work, including supervision, individual and group therapy, outreach, collaboration, applied research, adjunct teaching possibilities, I knew I wanted to pursue my Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology. I also received helpful guidance from a few great mentors. The flexibility and variety of professional activities associated with the Ph.D. can be realized through counseling center work.

What are your clinical interests?

My clinical interests include couples and family counseling, work-life balance, career counseling, and college student concerns (i.e., anxiety, self-esteem, identity development, family-of-origin issues).

Are you currently doing any research?

Yes, I'm currently working on a few projects with colleagues and faculty. Two projects are currently manuscripts submitted to journals (the physiological aspects of empathy between romantic partners and a literature review on the gender and cultural aspects of the work-family interface). Two projects are in the data collection stage (the influence of parents on the career decisions of international students and a proposed model of career counseling for international students). And my dissertation research focuses on understanding the influences of parental self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, social support, and role strain on life satisfaction of undergraduate student-mothers.

What has been your most important work experience?

Aside from my master's level internship at the BSU Counseling Center, I would have to say teaching the undergraduate course in counseling interventions (CPSY 420). I discovered my passion for training through teaching that course. I found it really exciting to watch the students develop and improve their use of the counseling skills. For similar reasons, I also enjoy supervising master's level student counselors.

Are there any populations that you especially enjoy working with in counseling?

I enjoy working with traditionally and nontraditionally aged college students as well as couples. Working

with college students is exciting for me not only because of my interest in "typical" college student concerns, but also because emerging adulthood is a time when identities and relationships may still be forming, which allows greater flexibility and change toward psychologically healthy patterns. One reason I enjoy working with couples is because of the importance of relationships and social support on happiness and wellbeing. The power of healthy relationships is truly amazing!

What do you hope to do after you graduate?

I hope to work at a university counseling center where training and outreach are emphasized. I would like to provide therapy, supervision, training, and outreach presentations while also having the opportunities to conduct program evaluation research and teach counseling courses. Ideally, the university would have a large graduate and nontraditional student population to increase the opportunities for couples and family work.



Desiree Howell, doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services

Featured Wellness Issue

The Healing Power of Love

By: Emily Mastroianni, M.A.

You may already know that having healthy relationships is good for your mental health. People in committed, healthy relationships report fewer symptoms of depression and are at a lower risk of substance abuse. Good relationships can lessen anxiety and self-doubt. In addition, many studies have shown that positive relationships reduce stress and help us cope better when facing life's challenges.

But wait, there's more! Healthy relationships aren't only good for our mental well being, but also improve our physical health. Indeed, married men and women have been found to live longer than their single peers. Relationship expert Dr. Sue Johnson reviews these many health related studies in her book, *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*. Here is a brief review of what researchers have found:

The Dangers of Loneliness:

Louise Hawkley of the Center



for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago has found that loneliness raises blood pressure to the point of doubling the risk of heart attack and stroke. In fact, Sociologist James House (University of Michigan) claims that emotional isolation is more dangerous to our health than smoking or high blood pressure.

Good for the Heart:

A healthy marriage has been found to reduce blood pressure and risk of heart attack in both men and women. In fact, in patients with congestive heart failure, the state of their marriage was a good predictor of survival after four years.

Heal Faster:

Research at Ohio State University showed that when couples fight, it lowers their immune system, or their ability to fight off disease and heal themselves. Indeed, it has been shown that flesh wounds healed twice as fast in spouses that had warm

interactions as compared to partners who were aggressive or hostile towards each other.

The Power of Touch:

Psychologist Jim Coan (University of Virginia) showed that simply holding your partner's hand could reduce stress and lesson pain. Indeed, Dr. Sue Johnson encourages touch as an important way for couples to connect, especially as a way to ease stress or heal emotional hurt within the relationship.





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Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic: Serving the Community Since 1969

Mission

- The clinic is a training and research facility for the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services.
- The clinic provides high-quality, low-cost psychological services to the Delaware County community and beyond.

Service Providers

- Over 50 graduate student counselors under the supervision of faculty.
- Faculty supervisors are licensed psychologists and counselors.

Services Offered

- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Child/Adolescent Counseling
- Group Counseling with a focus on:
 - Parenting
 - Social skills
 - Anger control
 - Issues of concern to children and adolescents

Hours of Operation

- August-May (Spring & Fall)
 - 9 AM to 9 PM M-Th
 - 9 AM to 12 PM Fri
- May-August (Summer)
 - 9 AM to 8 PM M-Th
 - Closed on Friday
- The clinic is closed during university vacations and holidays.

All clients have the right to receive timely, competent counseling services consistent with the ethical principles and guidelines established by professional organizations. All counseling services provided at the Counseling Practicum Clinic are guided by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association, the American Rehab Counseling Association, the General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, and the Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Services by Counseling Psychologists.