



Types of Relationships and Why They Matter

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Types of Relationships and Why They Matter

- Often, people think of romantic relationships when they consider this topic. Examples of other important relationships are those with family, friends, classmates, roommates, professors, coworkers, and college staff.
- Basically, anyone with whom you interact on a regular basis has the potential to influence your life and experience. It's worth thinking about how you treat them and how you expect to be treated.
- It's easier to take relationships for granted when they are going well. By giving some thought to the relationships you want to have, how you treat others and how you want to be treated, you can prevent problems that might cause significant stress and interfere with your ability to have a successful academic career and social life.



Parents and Family

- Families are unique. When you go to college, your relationship with your parents is likely to undergo changes—some dramatic and some gradual.
- A good first step in managing these changes is to be aware of the expectations that you and your family have of each other. The transition to college is a time when these expectations may really change for you, your parents, or both. If you have a good understanding of these expectations, you can minimize future conflict. Furthermore, it's worth paying attention to your expectations of them, including financial arrangement, their availability to you, how often you'll communicate, and so on. Sometimes, it is helpful to set up a regular time to talk daily, weekly or monthly.
- Parents and families can be an important source of support. It is reasonable to expect that a big change like you going to college will affect everyone, including you, your parents, siblings, extended family and even pets!

Friendships

- Studies show that the people who influence you most are your friends. Choose them wisely! They can also be an important source of support in tough times.
- In addition to seeking friends who are like you, consider how much you can learn by developing friendships with people who differ from you.
- Don't let electronic relationships replace in-person relationships.
- Remember that many online websites like My Space and Face Book are publicly accessible. Limit access to your site to people you trust, or carefully consider the image you are presenting to anyone who cares to look.



Roommates

- A roommate can be your best friend, or just someone with whom you can share your living space comfortably. Sometimes, your closest friend is not the most compatible roommate.
- Communicate, communicate, and communicate! It is helpful to discuss expectations for each other at the start instead of waiting for problems to arise. A few things you may want to discuss include any shared financial arrangements, sleeping/waking hours, guests, food, and sharing of personal possessions.
- If problems arise, it often helps to talk with your roommate politely but plainly. If you feel unable to bring up your differences, consider talking with a counselor at the USD Counseling Center, (619) 260-4655. You may also talk with an RA or someone else from Residence Life (619) 260-7656.

Romantic Relationships

- Typical romantic relationships often occur in stages, beginning with “passionate love,” which involves idealizing the partner and nurturing intense feelings for them, and then developing into “companionate love,” a calmer, more stable stage. Not all romantic relationships fit this model and there is nothing wrong with relationships that develop differently.
- Long distance relationships bring special challenges. If you are feeling confused or unhappy with your situation, you may want to give it time, talk with your partner, or change the relationship. Consider talking with friends or a counselor if this decision is difficult for you.



- People make a wide range of decisions about sexual behavior. If you are feeling pressured into doing something you are not comfortable with, know that you could end up feeling much worse if you take steps for which you are not ready. You do not owe anyone a justification for your personal decisions.
- When two people engage in sexual behavior, it is important that both people consent. Sometimes, one person might physically resist, or just say “Stop” or “No,” and under the law this indicates a lack of consent. After this, when one person persists with unwanted sexual touching or penetration, this constitutes sexual battery or rape. If you have been involved in a sexual experience that you did not want, consider talking to someone at the Counseling Center or the Health Center to take care of yourself and consider your options.
- You may be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, or know people who are. If you find you are in need of support, look for resources to help you among people you trust and the Counseling Center. The University expects that all students will treat others with respect and tolerance regardless of individual differences such as religion, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.
- Approximately one third of all college students will experience intimate partner violence. Signs that you may be in such a relationship include being frightened by your partner’s temper, isolating yourself because of your partner’s jealousy, or feeling you must justify everything you do. If you are experiencing the above situations, seek professional help. Have a safety plan handy and consult the police at *911 or Public Safety at *2222 and (619) 260-7777 off-campus. Consider accessing campus resources such as the Counseling Center at (619) 260-4655 or community resources such as Battered Women’s Services (619) 234-3164.



Communication in Relationships

- To avoid problems from the start, it’s a good idea to let others know your expectations of them and inquire about their expectations for you. People often have different assumptions about how relationships will develop. This is fine, but problems can arise when people assume their

expectations are the same and in fact they are not. Even when intentions are be good, this often can still result in bad feelings and broken trust.

- When problematic relationship patterns are not addressed early, they often get worse. You have a range of options, on the continuum from very direct to indirect communication.
- If you are communicating indirectly and you don't think your message is getting through, you may want to be more direct. Try to state your views clearly while respecting the other person's rights and feelings.
- It can be tempting to avoid communicating about problems, and in some situations that is appropriate, but be careful! If you always avoid discussing problems, they can get much worse. You may want to talk to a counselor if your communication style could be causing relationship problems.
- If you tend to communicate about problems in ways that makes them worse, consider seeing a counselor to get help with your communication style.

Campus Resources for Relationships

- Residence Life 260-7656
- University Ministry 260-2263
- Counseling Center 260-4655
- Public Safety 260-2222

Information summarized from:

Gardner, J. N. & Jewler A. J. (2006) Step by Step to College and Career Success. Boston, MA: Thomson Wadsworth.