



SAFE RELATIONSHIPS



Pregnancy demands a harm-free home

When you think about pregnancy you picture love, security and bonds that pull relationships closer. It is every person's right to live in a safe relationship that nurtures and lends support – a relationship free of harm. Now is the time to be sure about your relationship – before you welcome a new life. About 40% of woman abuse starts during a woman's first pregnancy. Emotional abuse often comes first. The woman is insulted, threatened, put down in public, blamed and told what to do. If left unchecked, this control can turn into physical abuse – slapping, hitting, shoving and more. It only gets worse over time.

Why do women suffer abuse? They may become survivors by shutting out their reality. Thoughts like, *"My baby needs a father,"* may keep a woman in a harmful relationship for years. Staying can be what hurts the unborn child the most. Battering can cause miscarriages, premature labour and stillbirths. Women might also turn to drugs or alcohol to cope, putting a developing baby in more danger.

Abuse – What are the signs?

You notice...

Depression

Confusion

Sleep disturbance or nightmares

Unusual physical complaints

Eating disorders

Anxiety or tension

Hopelessness or mood swings

Upsetting flashbacks

Unveiling abuse

Strong differences in beliefs could be warning signals that your relationship could become abusive. Both partners should ask themselves these questions...

- ❖ Is it OK for you to behave in a certain way, but not your partner?
- ❖ Have you ever forced your partner to do something to get what you want?
- ❖ Do you blame your partner for everything that goes wrong?
- ❖ Does your jealousy stop your partner from going places or seeing other people?
- ❖ Do you have set ideas about what each partner should be like or should do?

If you answered yes to any of these questions you might want to take a closer look at your relationship. Facing differences now will be easier than letting them take their toll when a pregnancy comes along.

Fill your family album with smiles, not bruises

Having a baby *does not* make a bad relationship better; it adds to the stress. Start your family in a healthy way. Know your relationship. Your values and beliefs about togetherness tell you how you will treat each other in a relationship. Check the list below to see how your answers compare.



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For me	A great relationship is...	For my partner
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making decisions for each other	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Caring and sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling safe from harm	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting pregnant	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friendship	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trust and honesty	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognizing differences	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making time only for each other	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dependency	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compromising	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling free to get as angry as you want	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obsession	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussing feelings, successes, mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expressing myself, my thoughts & feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>

Pre-parenting promises

You have certain strengths as a couple now. You can build on those.

- ❖ We would like to get better at... _____
- ❖ We would like to first tackle... _____
- ❖ We will do these things... _____
- ❖ We can count on help from... _____

Through this exercise you have had a chance to think about your own relationship. Sadly, it is common to discover a relationship that is destructive and abusive. But remember that your right to freedom from abuse is more valuable than a marriage or relationship that destroys you. Women should never be afraid to reach out for help. Don't feel guilty, ashamed or blame yourself for a failing relationship. Now is the time to make important decisions for yourself and for the health of the baby you are dreaming about.

FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER, CALL 911

Health care provider _____

Crisis centre _____

Sexual assault services _____

Women's shelters _____

Assaulted Women's Help Line: 1-866-863-0511

If you are an abuser consult, "Canada's Programs for Men Who Abuse Their Partners," <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/2002-menwhoabuse.pdf>