



PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES

Taking Care Of Ourselves

Sawtooth Mountain Clinic

Together Through Life • A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit

Topic of the Month

Subscribe at www.sawtoothmountainclinic.org

Free - Help Yourself!



Relationships: Green Lights & Red Flags



When we talk about “relationships,” it’s often assumed that we mean romance. While those kinds of attachments play a large role in many people’s lives, they’re certainly not the only relationships worth contemplating. We have other connections: family, friends, co-workers, supervisors, neighbors, and all of those associations can have relational “green lights” or “red flags.”

It's important to know which behaviors are “green lights” so that you can:

- choose to engage in those actions yourself.
- identify and, when possible, decide to be around people that offer those positive behaviors to you.

It's also important to know which behaviors are “red flags” that signal danger, so that you can:

- avoid inflicting those hurtful behaviors on other people.
- take the actions needed to protect yourself when others behave that way toward you.

GREEN LIGHTS

- ✓ **Respect** - Healthy relationships are grounded in feelings of admiration and esteem. Respect is demonstrated when we talk to someone kindly and truthfully and when we act in ways that show we value their time and opinions.
- ✓ **Trust** - When we trust someone, we believe that they have good intentions and feel safe with them. They’re dependable, and we know that they’ll act in our best interest, even when we’re apart.
- ✓ **Communication** - Good communication means being straightforward, even if it’s uncomfortable, in ways that the other person can absorb and understand. It’s talking frequently, openly, calmly, respectfully, and rationally.
- ✓ **Honesty** - Good communication is also about being honest. That means telling the truth (and all of it) in a timely matter.

- ✓ **Patience** - We all get thrown off balance and make mistakes. Healthy relationships take this into account and respond gently and with compassion.
- ✓ **Flexibility** - Life can be chaotic, but healthy relationships have the ability to shift, flex, and “go with the flow.”
- ✓ **Empathy** - It’s important to be able and willing to put yourself in someone else’s position and imagine their perspective, even if you disagree with their opinions.
- ✓ **Reciprocity** - In a solid relationship, people do what they can for others - in balanced, equal, but not necessarily identical, ways.
- ✓ **Appreciation** - Noticing someone’s kind actions and then intentionally expressing that gratitude lets people know that they are being seen and valued.
- ✓ **Room for Growth** - People grow and change and need the room and safety to do that. In a strong relationship, it’s safe to ask questions, take risks, give honest feedback, and make mistakes.
- ✓ **Individuality & Boundaries** - It’s also safe to be distinct individuals with separate interests, goals, friends, and hobbies. It’s important that those differences are appreciated and encouraged.
- ✓ **Healthy Conflict Resolution** - Even the strongest and healthiest of relationships will have some disagreements. Being able and willing to discuss things that are difficult or upsetting, while at the same time remaining respectful and empathetic, keeps relationships resilient.

For more relational “green lights,” check out [What Does A Healthy Relationship Look Like?](#)

**Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support. We're here to help!
Ask a nurse or provider if you'd like to talk.**

Relationship Red Flags



Most of us determine what feels normal in a relationship based upon the way we saw people relating when we were growing up. Unfortunately, for many people, those interactions weren't always filled with "green lights." This can lead us to think that some behaviors are okay, when, in fact, they're big "red flags." Here are things to look out for, both in your own behaviors and in the behaviors of others.

RED FLAGS

Contempt can be camouflaged as sarcasm, being condescending, hurtful humor, insults, or making fun of someone. It sends the message of one person being superior and the other being inferior.

Suspicion stems from not believing that someone has your best interest at heart. It can show up as attempts to track whereabouts, control behaviors, or limit relationships with other people, even if those relationships are healthy and supportive.

Lack of Communication can mean shutting down discussions with emotional distance (the silent treatment), anger, or changing the topic. It can also be dominating conversations, leaving others with no time to talk or not listening when they do.

Dishonesty can show up both as knowingly telling untruths, or it can be withholding information.

Impatience is demonstrated by frequent frustration with the natural ebb and flow of life or having expectations that are unrealistic or inappropriate.

Rigidness is expecting things to be a specific way regardless of circumstance. It's accountability taken to the extreme.

Dependence and Conformity require someone to give up their autonomy, and requires the following of rigid relationship "rules." It demands that struggles in the relationship be kept secret, even from trusted, supportive people.

Lack of Reciprocity is when one person insists that their stipulations be met but is unwilling to consider someone else's needs, asks that rules be broken for them, or rarely contributes to shared work.

Lack of Empathy is shown by a refusal or inability to consider another person's perspective and the reasons that they might feel that way.

Lack of Appreciation is signaled by not noticing someone's efforts, not expressing gratitude, or neglecting to acknowledge someone's contributions.

Lack of Growth is found in "red flag" relationships. If minimizing mistakes is the priority, that leaves no room for learning and changing.

Poor Conflict Resolution includes yelling or physical harm, misplaced blame, defensiveness, overgeneralizing, a need to "win," forgetting to listen to the other person, making assumptions, attaching someone's character, and refusing to discuss problems.

Here are some general questions that will help you to determine if you're in a "red flag" relationship or a "green light" one.

1. *How does this person treat others?* Kindly and patiently? Aggressively? Manipulatively?
2. *How does this person deal with conflict?* If in the wrong, does this person apologize and work toward repairing hurts? Or are they spiteful? Cruel?
3. *How do you feel when you're with this person?* Supported and understood? Nervous? Hurt? Weighed down?
4. *Does this person make you feel like you matter?* Or are you left feeling trivialized or ignored?

To learn more about what makes relationships helpful or hurtful, check out [The Gottman Institute](#).

The Behavioral Health Team at SMC is available to help you navigate relationship challenges and growth. Call (218) 387-2330 to set up an appointment.

If you see any "red flags" that make you afraid for your safety or well-being, call the Violence Prevention Center at (218) 387-1237.