



**Neighbours, Friends & Families**  
Immigrant & Refugee Communities



## Checklist for Healthy Romantic Relationships

For international students, the experience of completing higher studies in Canadian colleges and universities can be both exciting and challenging. Apart from the studies, students are faced with new social and cultural norms, especially when it comes to dating and intimate relationships.



International students from marginalized groups may encounter additional challenges in navigating dating, such as experiencing prejudice because of racism or homophobia.

When partners are from different cultures or faiths, adapting to different dating practices can be especially challenging. Interfaith or intercultural couples may face challenges in gaining acceptance and support from their respective communities.

Here are some checklist questions that specifically address these differences to help determine a healthy romantic relationship.

### Understanding of Cultural Differences

- Is your partner respectful of your cultural background and willing to learn about it without judgment?
- Do you feel secure, valued, and accepted as you are without any demands for change?

### Communication about Expectations

- Have you openly discussed your expectations and preferences regarding dating practices?
- Does your partner treat you with kindness and consideration, even during disagreements?
- Are you comfortable expressing your needs and boundaries?
- Can you be vulnerable and share your thoughts and feelings without feeling judged?

### Independence and Choice

- Do you feel free to make your own decisions and choices, regardless of cultural or societal expectations?
- Are you comfortable about your relationship without feeling forced into hiding it from friends or families?

## Consent and Boundaries

- Is there clear and ongoing communication about consent and relationship intentions?
- Does your partner respect your boundaries, opinions, and individuality?
- Do you feel safe and respected during intimate moments?
- Is there mutual, enthusiastic, and ongoing consent and comfort in physical intimacy?
- Is your partner willing to adjust their behavior when you express discomfort with certain actions or expectations?
- Are you respectful of your partner's choices?

## Flexibility and Compromise

- Do you and your partner communicate openly, honestly, and respectfully with each other?
- Are both of you active listeners, and do you feel comfortable expressing your thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment?
- Are you both willing to be flexible and find common ground in navigating cultural differences related to dating practices?

## Peer and Family Pressure

- Do you and your partner have an open and non-judgmental dialogue about dealing with external pressures about differences in your cultural, faith, or social beliefs?
- Does your partner defend and support you when family or friends judge or stereotype you and your community?

Healthy relationships should be based on mutual understanding, open communication, and a willingness to understand and learn from each other's backgrounds. If you find that cultural differences are causing significant challenges in your relationship, consider seeking support from counselors at your college who can provide guidance and help you navigate these complexities.

## SEEK SUPPORT FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

While all students may have concerns about reporting sexual violence on campus, international students may have extra concerns. Language barriers, shame, stigma, and cultural concerns make reporting and accessing services more challenging. Some students may also fear that reporting a crime could affect their future immigration plans or even result in them being deported.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence, please seek help and support from organizations that specialize in assisting individuals who have been through this trauma.

## YOU MIGHT CONSIDER WHAT HELP OR RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE IN YOUR COLLEGE OR YOU CAN CALL:

- Good2Talk at 1-866-925-5454 or Text GOOD2TALKON to 686868. The helpline provides free, confidential support services for post-secondary students in Ontario.
- Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-877-949-6051 or 1.833.286.9865 (TTY) for support available 24/7 in over 200 languages.
- FEM'AIDE at 1-877-336-2433 or 1-866-860-7082 (ATS) for services in French.

For more information, visit:  
[www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca](http://www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca)

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