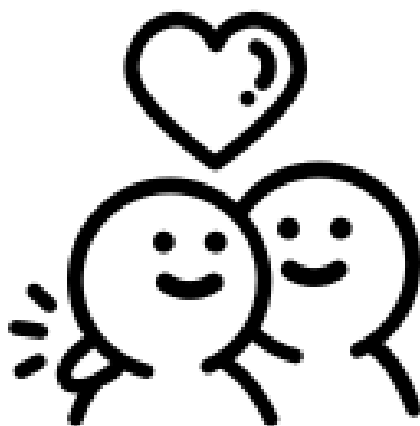


# Your Life, Your Rights

## Chapter 5:

# Relationships

Easy Read Guidebook



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*This easy read guidebook has been designed using images from Flaticon.com*

# How to Use This Guidebook



This Guidebook is about your right to relationships.



**Relationships** are bonds you have with other people.



Everyone has the right to relationships.



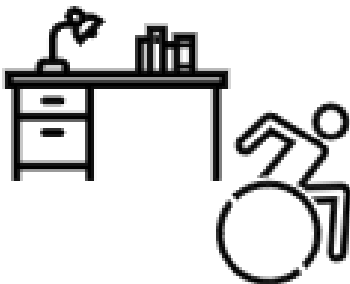
This Guidebook will explain some of your relationship rights.



Some of this information may make you sad or upset.



Stop reading this guidebook and ask for support if you start to feel upset.



You do not have to read this guidebook all at once.



It is okay to take breaks as you read this guidebook.

# Part 1: Right to Relationships



You have the right to relationships.



**Relationships** are bonds you have with other people and can bring joy to your life.



You can have a relationship with family, friends, dating partners, and more.



Who you have relationships with and what you do in those relationships is your choice.

# Your relationship rights include:



## 1. Have different types of relationships.



You get to choose who to have relationships with, including:



- The family members you are closest to.



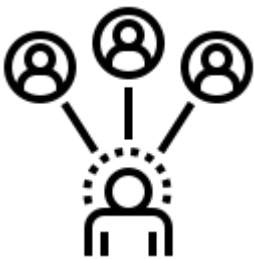
- The people you are friends with.



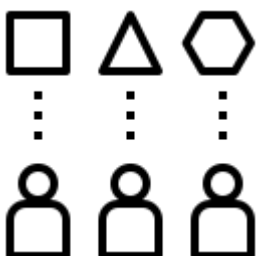
- The people you are romantic with.



- People at work or in your community you like being with.



You can have more than one relationship at once.



Each relationship will add different things to your life.



## 2. Start new relationships.



You can decide to meet new people and start a relationship with them at any time.



You may meet new people in the community, like at work or special events.



You may also meet new people online, like virtual support groups or gaming groups.



You and the person you meet must both agree to start a relationship.



It is important for both of you to be clear about what you want from the relationship.



For example, you need to be clear if you want to date or just be friends.



Knowing the relationship you are starting will help it grow.



### 3. End relationships at any time.



There are times relationships end on their own.



For example, two friends that met at school may stop being friends when school ends.



There are other times you may want to end your relationship with someone.



You may decide to end a relationship for many reasons.



One reason may be because you and the other person stop getting along.



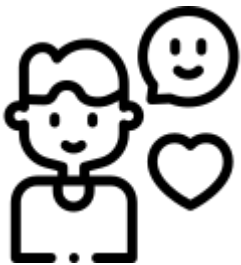
Another reason may be because the other person is harmful to you.



No matter what the reason is, you can end any relationship that no longer brings you joy.



#### 4. Be treated with dignity and respect.



You deserve to be treated with kindness.



Your thoughts, feelings, and wants should be respected.



There must be kindness and respect to have a healthy relationship.



## 5. Not be abused or hurt in relationships.



You should never feel unsafe in a relationship with another person.



It is not okay for a person you are in a relationship with to harm you, including:



- Your physical body.



- Your feelings or emotions.



- Your privacy.



Being harmed by someone is **abuse** and is never okay.



You have the right to be in relationships that are free from abuse.



## 6. Have privacy when you want it.



It is okay to take space and spend time alone.



You do not have to spend all your time with a person you are in a relationship with.



You can also keep certain things to yourself, like things you are not ready to share or talk about yet.



Your right to privacy includes setting boundaries.



**Boundaries** are rules you have about how you want people to treat you in relationships.



You also have the right to privacy with the person you are in a relationship with.



This means you and your partner can spend time alone without staff or family around.



**7. Say “no” to things you don’t want to do.**



You should never feel forced to do anything.



This is true even if you have done the activity before.



It is okay to say “no” and refuse to do things you don’t want to do.



This can be saying no to small things, like going to a community event.



This can also be saying no to big things, like doing dangerous or risky things.



If something feels wrong, you can say “no” until you learn more about the activity.



Being able to say “no” is part of your right to make choices in relationships.



## 8. Do things you want to do.



In a relationship, you and the other person should take turns picking activities to do.



You should not only do the things your partner wants to do.



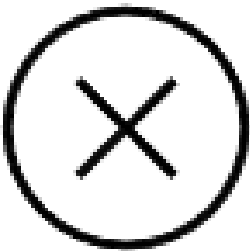
You should be able to do things that interest you.



No one should stop you from doing something you really want to.



It is okay if your partner does not want to do what you want to do.



It is not okay if your partner tries to stop you from doing what you want to do.



It is okay to do the things you want to do without your partner and for your partner to do some things without you.



## 9. Share your thoughts and interests.



Part of what makes relationships special is you have people to share things with.



This may be sharing your ideas, feelings, and more.



The people you have relationships with should give you support.



They should not make you feel bad for being excited about something.



They should not put you down or say mean things to you when you share your thoughts.



This does not mean they have to agree with everything you say or do.



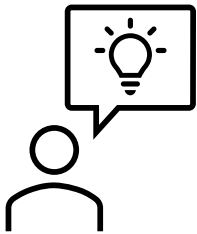
They can disagree with you but should still respect you.



## 10. Have romantic relationships and date.



This includes learning how to stay safe while dating.



This also includes learning about your sexuality.



**Sexuality** is about your sexual feelings.



**Sexuality** is also about the romantic feelings you have for other people.



The people you choose to date can be any gender.



You have the right to explore yourself through dating.



You also have the right not to date if you do not want to.



## 11. Marry the person you love.



People with disabilities have the same right to marry as people without disabilities.



You and your partner must be adults to get married.



You and your partner must agree to get married.



You can marry a person that is has a different gender from you.



You can also marry a person that is the same gender as you.



There may be some challenges if you have a legal guardian.



Even if you have a legal guardian, you still have the right to share your thoughts and make choices.



## 12. Become a parent to a child or pet.



You have the right to start your own family.



There may be some challenges you come across when trying to start a family.



For example, you may have a legal guardian that has the right to make choices for you.



Guardians should talk to you about things you want before making choices for you.



Another challenge you may come across has to do with where you live.



Not every place you live will allow pets.



Most of the challenges you come across can be overcome so you can still live the life you choose.

# Part 2: Advocating For Fair Treatment



It is important to know what your relationship rights are.



Knowing your rights is the first step to advocate for yourself.



**Advocating** for yourself means to stick up for yourself.



Advocating for yourself brings you closer to living the life you choose.

# Part 3: Protecting Your Rights



You are the best person to protect your right to healthy relationships.



If you are in an unsafe relationship, call the BHDDH Quality Assurance (QA) hotline at **(401) 462-2629** to report the abuse.



Call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room if you are in danger and need help right away.

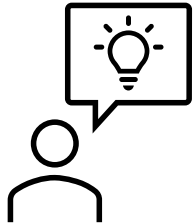


Remember, you have the right to fair treatment and to live your best life.

# Part 4: Resources



In this section you will find a list of websites you can visit.



You can explore these websites to learn more about your rights.



You can never learn too much about your rights.



Once you learn your rights you will be better able to protect them.

# List of websites to learn more:

## American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

- [Know Your Rights: LGBTQ Rights \(website\)](#)
- The ACLU focuses on protecting the rights of people living in America. This webpage shares information about the rights LGBTQ people have. **LGBTQ** stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer.

## ACLU Rhode Island

- [Know Your Rights: Trans Rights \(website\)](#)
- This webpage shares information on trans rights. **Trans** stands for transgender.

## ADA.gov US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division

- [Rights of Parents with Disabilities \(website\)](#)
- Visit this website to learn about the rights of parents with disabilities.

## **Elevatus Training**

- [Sexual Rights Toolkit \(PDF\)](#) and [Checklist: Are Your Sexual Rights Being Honored or Taken Away \(PDF\)](#)
- Elevatus Training is an organization. They train people with disabilities and providers about sexuality. Their toolkit and checklist share information about sexuality rights and safety.

## **Human Rights Campaign**

- [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions \(website\)](#)
- Visit this website to learn about sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **Independent Living Association, Inc.**

- [Romance and Love Among the I/DD Population \(website\)](#)
- Visit this webpage to learn about love, online dating, and more.

## Love is Respect

- [loveisrespect.org](https://loveisrespect.org)
- Visit this website to learn about relationships. The website shares information about dating, staying safe, and more.

## National Partnership for Women & Families and Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN)

- [Access, Autonomy, and Dignity: People with Disabilities and the Right to Parent \(PDF\)](#)
- Review this guidebook to learn about parent rights. The guidebook shares information on supporting people with disabilities becoming parents.

## Rhode Island Department of Health

- [SOGI Equity: Partners and Additional Resources](#)
- **SOGI** stands for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equity Group. Visit this website for resources and information for the LGBTQ community.

## The Arc Minnesota

- [Abuse Prevention: Romantic Relationships in the Lives of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(website\)](#)
- Visit this website to review a training video about relationships. The training is on things that stop people with disabilities from dating. The training shares tips on supporting people with disabilities. The website also shares other relationship tools.

## University Center for Excellences in Developmental Disabilities

- [Rights: Learn about relationship, sexual and reproductive rights \(website\)](#)
- Visit this website for a list of relationship rights. The website has many other tips and tools about relationships.