A BRIEF GUIDE ON NAVIGATING CONSENT, BOUNDARIES, AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS.
RELATIONSHIPS ARE ABOUT COMMUNICATION

THE FOUNDATION OF ANY RELATIONSHIP IS COMMUNICATION, BUT COMMUNICATION IS OFTEN ONE OF THE HARDEST, MOST AWKWARD, AND UNCOMFORTABLE PARTS OF A RELATIONSHIP.

WE’VE CURATED SOME CONVERSATIONS IN ORDER TO HELP YOU OUT!

WHEN YOU GO ON A TINDER DATE BUT DON’T FEEL THE VIBES:

Hey, tonight was so much fun and I had a great time with you. I’d love to do it again soon ;)! 

Hey, tonight was fun and you’re hilarious, but if I’m being honest, I didn’t feel a romantic spark. So I don’t think it would be right for me to say yes to a second date.

WHEN YOU WANNA HAVE A SERIOUS CHAT WITH YOUR PARTNER

I want to talk about something kinda heavy, are you in a space for me to do that?
Hey, I know we’re friends, but honestly, I’m starting to have feelings for you. Would you be up for hanging out and talking about it?

Babe, I can’t wait to get home tonight, I’ve been thinking about you all day ;)

I’ve had such a long day, I can’t wait either! I’ve been feeling really anxious though, can we keep it to cuddling and make outs tonight? Then if I’m feeling less in my head we can see where things go?

Of course, babe! Let’s chat about your anxiety tonight and order in Indian food. Sincerely, your big spoon.

I’m interested in exploring a polyamorous relationship, can we talk about what that would look like?
Relationships are an important way people connect with one another and create community. Relationships take many forms and look different for everyone. From family, friendship, sexual, or romantic, your relationships will grow and change as you grow and change. Healthy relationships enhance feelings of belonging and support, and allow you to feel comfortable to be yourself. For 2SLGBTQ (Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) people, this is especially important.

Relationships also take work and effort. We’re not born knowing healthy relationship skills, however, we are able to learn these skills from watching others and by practicing in our own relationships.

**FOUNDATIONS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP CAN INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

- **Shared honesty and trust** (eg. you give each other space to hang out with friends without thinking the other is cheating)
- **Clear and open communication** (eg. you talk about your feelings)
- **Respect for boundaries** (eg. you use proper pronouns for one another)
- **Feeling safe and valued** (eg. you never threaten to 'out' one another)
- **Fairness and equality** (eg. you treat one another as equals)
- **Conflict is addressed respectfully** (eg. you take responsibility for your actions)

Ultimately, you get to decide what is healthy for you and what is not. If something doesn’t feel right, trust your gut! Reach out for support, and remember: you’re not alone.
We can hold many types of relationships over our lifetime. You can explore different relationships and decide which ones you feel most comfortable in. Be sure to communicate this in current and future partnerships. Whether sexual, romantic, or platonic, knowing what feels affirming for you will help in building healthy relationships with others.

While many people practice monogamy and are comfortable having one intimate, sexual relationship, there are also people who prefer polyamorous relationships and consentually date multiple people at the same time. Additionally, others prefer a more casual or open approach to sexual intimacy and may not be interested in forming a romantic relationship with their sex partner(s).

Some people do not experience sexual attraction at all, or experience sexual desire only in certain circumstances, and instead prefer to form strong romantic relationships and friendships.

**ULTIMATELY, EVERYONE HAS DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIP AND INTIMACY NEEDS, AND THAT’S OKAY!**
Consent is important in all relationships and requires ongoing conversations about personal boundaries. Whether your relationship is monogamous or polyamorous, short or long term, platonic or familial, consent is needed before all forms of physical touch (sexual or not).

You can receive consent by asking someone:

“WOULD IT BE OK IF I GAVE YOU A HUG/KISSED YOU/TOUCHED YOUR HAIR/ETC?”

If you don’t get a “Yes, that’s OK,” it’s necessary for you to respect their boundaries and stop. Only yes means yes! Consent is practiced in healthy relationships and should never be expected, forced, or pressured. It’s also important to remember that a person who is intoxicated by alcohol and/or drugs or is asleep is not able to give consent.

**CONSENT TIPS:**

- If your partner(s) is asexual and does not want to have sex, you must respect their boundaries and not pressure them to have sex.
- If your partner(s) is transgender, you should inquire about any potential sexual triggers that could cause them gender dysphoria.
- If you are polyamorous, you must make sure all your partners are aware of, and agree to, this style of relationship.
- If you want to explore a new sexual activity (i.e. using toys, a certain position), always discuss what you want to explore with your partner(s) before attempting to try it. And be open to your partner(s) saying no.
The key to a healthy relationship is communication. If you are in a sexual/romantic relationship with someone who is trans, consider these tips in order to be an affirming partner:

- Your partner’s trans identity is not the only important part of who they are. If you want to date or have sex with a person just because they are trans, that’s problematic and is referred to as ‘fetishizing’.

- You may need to discuss what label(s) to use for your relationship so that everyone feels comfortable and affirmed (i.e. “boyfriend” vs “partner” vs “datemate”). Work out what feels right together.

- Everyone’s relationship to their body is unique. Have a conversation about how you each want to describe your bodies. For example, some trans guys and non-binary folks may prefer to use the term ‘chest’ instead of ‘breasts’. Using the wrong words can cause gender dysphoria, so find out what language your partner finds affirming.
YOU STARTED DATING SOMEONE COOL, AND THEN THEY CAME OUT - NOW WHAT? HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

Life is an ongoing journey of self discovery. Many people don’t come out until later in life for a variety of reasons, such as societal pressures and norms or safety concerns. Additionally, a person’s experience of their own identity can change and shift over time.

The cool person you’re dating is still the same cool person you love. Who they are as a person isn’t changing, but the words they use to describe themselves may change.

Your reaction to your partner coming out can have a big impact on their experience. Being supportive and accepting, even if you’re still sorting everything out, is really important.

Show your partner you care and educate yourself about your partner’s identity. Are there things you can learn to be a better ally? Are there gaps in you knowledge around certain topics?
IF YOUR PARTNER COMES OUT AS TRANSGENDER:

Ask your partner what pronouns and name they want to go by. These may not change, but asking them shows you’re supportive of their decision.

If your partner chooses to transition, ask what support they need. This will prevent you from making potentially harmful assumptions. Do they want you to go with them to doctor’s appointments, help give them hormone injections, go clothes shopping with them, attend a support group with them, etc.?

Check in with your partner around boundaries and sexual practices. Things may have changed (for either of you), and it’s incredibly important to be respectful of these changes.

There may be an adjustment period as you process everything. Talk to your partner about any concerns or worries you may have and give yourself permission to feel what you need to feel.

“THE COOL PERSON YOU’RE DATING IS STILL THE SAME COOL PERSON YOU LOVE”
Below is a list of questions to help you figure out what is important to you in your sexual and/or romantic relationships:

- How do I show appreciation and affection? How do I want to be appreciated or shown affection? (eg. I enjoy holding hands in public)
- How comfortable am I talking about my feelings during conflict? What helps me feel comfortable? (eg. I need to take short breaks to cool off)
- How do I show support for others, especially during tough times? How do I want to be supported? (eg. I offer a listening ear or I send thoughtful texts)
- What values are most important to me and how do they impact my relationship? (eg. family, culture, etc.)
- What are my needs around sex and intimacy? How do I talk about sex, pleasure, contraception/birth control, and boundaries with my partner(s)? (eg. I have specific language I like when people refer to my body)
We often hear about domestic violence in heterosexual and cisgender relationships, but violence and abuse exists in any type of relationship, regardless of a person’s sexual orientation or gender. In the 2SLGBTQ community, domestic violence is intensified because of homo/trans/biphobia and heterosexism. Abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal, spiritual, or financial.

**SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS:**

- Forced or pressured sexual activity
- Hitting, punching, or threatening physical harm
- Controls where you go, who you see, or how you dress
- Putting you down and being overly critical of you
- Isolating you from friends and family
- Being overly possessive or jealous
- Controls how you spend your money
- Threatens to “out” you to family, coworkers, or others
- Threatens to harm themselves if you leave them
- Questions or doubts your sexuality or gender
- Refuses to have safer sex if you’ve requested it
- Discloses your HIV, mental health, or health status without consent

If you experience any of these factors in your relationship, it might be helpful to talk to someone about it. These behaviours might initially feel like love and affection, but they are not healthy and should be viewed as warning signs of abuse.
It’s never okay for someone to treat you badly. There is no excuse for any kind of abuse. Learning the warning signs of abuse and being prepared to respond to it will help keep you safe while dating.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO STAY SAFE:

1. Get to know the person you’re dating. Ask questions about past relationships or strong beliefs they hold.
2. Suggest a group activity with others or a double date when you first start seeing someone new.
3. Before you go on a date, know where you’re going and what you’ll be doing. Let a parent/guardian or friend know what your plans are and when you’ll be home.
4. If you’re using drugs and/or alcohol, be aware there may be an increased risk of violence. Your ability to react in a potentially dangerous situation is impaired.
5. Trust your instincts! If you feel uncomfortable, remain calm and find a safe way to leave the situation.

If you are afraid for your safety, or the safety of others, ask for help from someone you trust and feel safe with. If you’re in immediate danger and feel safe enough to do so, call 911.
OUTSASKATOON

Peer support (over the phone and in person), individual & couple’s counselling (appointments can be booked online), and Sexual Health Clinic with STBBI and HIV testing available
(306) 665-1224
1-800-358-1833
outsaskatoon.ca

SASKATOON SEXUAL ASSAULT & INFORMATION CENTRE

24-Hour Crisis Line
Individual & Group Counselling
Survivor Assistance
(306) 244-2294
ssaic.ca

FAMILY SERVICE SASKATOON

Intimate Partner Violence Program
Walk-in Counselling
Domestic Violence Court Case Support
Community Counselling
Anger Management for Youth & Parents
(306) 244-0127
familyservice.sk.ca

“YOU NEVER DESERVE TO BE TREATED BADLY AND IT IS NEVER YOUR FAULT.”
See a term you’re not familiar with? Here’s a quick reference list of terms that are used in this resource.

**COMING OUT** • The ongoing process of someone acknowledging their sexuality and/or gender to themselves and to others. Coming out is a process that is specific to each person and does not have a set timeline or process. A person can come out in whatever way feels best for them. This may look like telling people face-to-face, writing a letter, or calling or texting people.

Coming out can also be seen as a Western concept and other cultures may have different ideas or practices for how a person acknowledges who they are and how that may be shared with others. Some cultures consider sexuality and gender to be private matters while others see this as shared knowledge.

**FETISHIZE** • When someone views a person as a sexual object and hypersexualizes their identity and/or body (i.e. gender or sexual orientation). Fetishization objectifies and dehumanizes queer and trans people, and assumes that queer and trans identities are consumable for the pleasure of others.
**MONOGAMY** • The practice of having one exclusive intimate relationship.

**POLYAMORY** • The practice of having more than one intimate relationship.

**PLATONIC** • A close, intimate relationship that is not sexual

**PRONOUNS** • Words that are used to refer to someone. Some examples of pronouns include, but are not limited to, they/them, she/her, he/him, ze/zir, and many more.

**TRANSITIONING** • The process a person chooses in order to feel more comfortable socially, physically, and legally. Transitioning describes the ways a person may adjust their social, physical, or legal realities to feel more comfortable in their everyday life. Some trans folks may undergo some, all, or no types of transitions.

For a more comprehensive list of queer terms, check out www.outsaskatoon.ca/queer_terms
OUTSaskatoon works to uplift 2SLGBTQ people by leading, serving, and supporting in a dynamic community. OUTSaskatoon fosters physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health through community support groups, counselling, drop-in services, queer-specific education and training, sexual health services, community events, and a long-term group home for Two Spirit, queer and trans youth ages 16-21.

FIND MORE RESOURCES AT:
www.outsaskatoon.ca
hello@outsaskatoon.ca