

SOME IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Build and Maintain Trust with a Partner

- Discuss your expectations with your boyfriend/girlfriend and make sure you're on the same wave length.
- Behave in a trustworthy manner. (Honor any commitments. For example, if this is an exclusive relationship, manage outside temptations and avoid situations where you may betray your partner's trust.)
- Respect your boyfriend/girlfriend's personal limits and boundaries.
- If your boyfriend/girlfriend is trustworthy, show that you trust him or her.

Communicate Effectively

- Be honest – put what you're thinking or feeling out there – don't hold things in and allow them to build up.
- Listen carefully (Pay full attention; listen for the words and the feelings).
- After listening, check out your understanding (Repeat what you heard and have your partner confirm or correct your understanding).
- Avoid negative patterns, such as criticizing, blaming, demanding, thinking the worst, trying to read your partner's mind, "flipping the script," etc.

Manage Conflict Effectively

- Recognize conflict – don't avoid it or deny that it's happening.
- Discuss relationship conflicts in private, not in public.
- Listen to each other carefully when you disagree. You might need to put off the conversation until you can listen calmly and carefully.
- Avoid doing things to make the conflict more intense. Do something to lighten the moment.
- If you see that the conflict is getting out of control, take a time out.
- Go over past conflicts to discuss each of your roles in the conflict and what you will do differently next time.