

## **ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AND LOVE**

Love is one of the most special feelings that we always long for, that trembles our heart and occupies our mind.

Romantic relationships should be considered as a process.

Although the capacity for sexual intimacy starts at adolescence, one may have difficulty with establishing a complete intimate relationship, before knowing him/herself well.

Being “we”, before being “I” may make the relationship very tiring. We complete several developmental phases as we grow up and likewise we also need to gain our individualization socially.

It is highly probable that you will have a boy/girlfriend during your university years. In this environment with few rules, some suggestions may help.

### **How should a successful relationship be?**

In a successful relationship both you and your partner:

- Enjoy each other and spending time together,
- Can comfortably be him/herself,
- Have mutual respect and commitment,
- Are sexually harmonious (don't forget that sexuality is a broader concept than just intercourse!),
- Share similar values,
- Are able to acknowledge and express emotions and needs.

### **Establishing trust and building intimacy**

Settling these features takes time and requires the following:

- Being eager to share both ups and downs of daily life
- Taking the risk to trust
- Developing emotional security (reliability, honesty, commitment, and fidelity)
- Maintaining emotional unity
- Being open
- Being supportive, non-directive and non-threatening

### **What should I avoid doing?**

- Giving angry and negative reactions to the information that comes from the partner, being close to new experiences,
- Deceitfulness and duplicity,
- An inefficient, impersonal and ordinary sexuality that lacks love,
- Misunderstanding, misinterpreting what the partner says,
- Dominating or obeying

### **How should the communicational style be?**

Nobody is born with communication skills, they can be learned. Start now; they will help you for the rest of your life. Here are some suggestions:

- Express your expectations directly.
- Ask for feedback.
- Listen to both the content and the affect as your partner talks.
- Summarize his/her words briefly in order to make sure that you understand and to show him/her that you understand.
- Don't forget that all pleasant relationships require effort - be honest about how much you will invest in your relationship.

### **Should we fight?**

It is normal to have differences, so develop your skills of fair fighting:

- Argue each time on one topic.
- Attack the problem, not your partner.
- Don't use your partner's sensitive issues against him/her during your arguments or don't insult him/her.
- Stay in the present tense, don't dig up the past.
- Don't hit and run away, tell how you feel.
- Be fair: give each of you equal time.
- Don't forget that you are in the same team: if one of you lose, the relationship will lose.
- Accept when you are wrong.

- Negotiate, thus some needs of both parties will be met.
- Show him/her that you care, appreciate his/her positive efforts.

### **If a relationship ends...**

Sometimes relationships do not work out and we postpone giving it an end. Some suggestions:

- Allow yourself to understand your feelings.
- Be ready to feel guilt and anger.
- Note down the conditions that harmed your relationship – this is the first step to change them.
- Go into the new experiences gradually.
- Seek support and give yourself time to heal.

### **Are you addicted?**

A bad relationship makes you feel constant disappointment and discomfort. It seems to have a potential but never reaches it. Actually, the commitment in these situations is not to the relationship, but to the person who can't be reached. Although this kind of relationships gives pain, most people cannot give them up.

There are some signs of addictive relationship below:

- Although you know (and told) that this relationship is bad for you, you took no effective steps to end it.
- You find excuses to continue the relationship.
- When you think about breaking up, you feel a terrible anxiety and fear.
- When you try to break up, you start having physical and psychological complaints.

When you notice that you are addicted, you can inquire its reasons. By this way, you can gain a perspective for the possibility of recovery or the decision to end your relationship.

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### **For More Information**

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(The services are available only to the students and staff of İstanbul Bilgi University.)

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