

## Choosing to Make a Commitment



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*Content on this side is intended for the educator's reference. The information on the back can be photocopied and shared with clients.*

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**Objective:** Clients will become aware of factors to consider when deciding to commit to a new relationship.

**Audience:** This tool is applicable to clients in new relationships, including those who have recently met someone, who are thinking about moving in together, or getting married.

**Estimated Time:** 10-20 minutes

**Educator Instructions:** Review the instructions printed on the tool. After processing the client's response to each item, reinforce that making a commitment to be with (and marry) someone requires careful thought, especially when children are involved. Challenge your client to carefully consider whether committing to this relationship is in his/her (and the children's) best interest. Take time to talk about positive and negative aspects of the potential partner and how the client might proceed with the relationship. If the client answered "NO" or "NOT SURE" to any of these questions, urge him/her to be cautious and think carefully about the decision to commit to this relationship. S/he may just need more time to interact with and observe the partner before making any serious commitments.

**Important:** Regardless of whether you agree with the client's choice of partner, offer appropriate support. Be honest about your opinion as to whether the client's relationship choice is appropriate for his/her situation (for example, you may believe the relationship makes the home less safe for children). *Pay special attention to signs that the relationship has a history of violence. Strongly urge victims of violence to seek help.*

**Discussion Starter:** Healthy relationships require good choices and hard work. Making the choice to [stay with; move in with; marry] is just that, a choice and decision you have to make. This is something you do not want to take lightly or just let happen. You don't want to *slide* into a commitment that you [and your children] are not ready for. Let's look at the list of statements below and take a few minutes to talk about your answers.

**Follow-up:** If your client is still trying to decide, and needs more guidance, consider sharing and discussing the *Know* tools. If you have another visit with the individual, talk about how the relationship has progressed. Are they still together or not? What were some of the most important factors they considered? Do they still feel like they made the right choice?





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Healthy relationships are the result of good choices and hard work. Choosing a partner carefully is an important part of lasting relationships. Even if you feel like someone is your “soul mate” or think a relationship was “meant to be,” take time to reflect before getting serious and making a commitment to that person.

There are many things to consider when making this important decision. Below are a few things that help make relationships healthy. Read through the following statements and mark **YES** or **NO** to each one. It takes time to learn about our partners, so if you don’t know yet, check **NOT SURE**.

**Yes   No   Not Sure**

- |                          |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | My partner respects me and treats me with kindness.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I know this person well, and have seen how s/he acts in many kinds of situations.              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We value many of the same things and have similar interests.                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have talked about how many kids we want to have.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have the same ideas about how to raise children.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I like the way this person treats my (and his/her or other) children.                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I can put up with our differences. (Remember, many will not change!)                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Drugs and alcohol are not a part of our current life.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have similar values and ideas about how to handle money.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | When we have disagreements we are able to talk (not yell) through them.                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I know what this person’s family is like and I can see things I like about my partner in them. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friends and family who I trust think this person is right for me.                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | My partner never pressures me to do things I do not want to do, or that I think are wrong.     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have talked about our goals for the future.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Our relationship is free from violence.*   |

\* Violence is never part of a healthy relationship. If you or someone you love has been a victim of relationship violence, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE) from a safe telephone. No one deserves to be hurt.

- For statements you checked “YES” to, would your partner also answer yes? Talk with your partner about these things to make sure you are on the same page.
- If you answered “NO” to any of these questions, think carefully before committing to this relationship. This person might not be the best partner for you (and/or your children).
- If you are “NOT SURE,” take extra time to talk with your partner about these things and to learn more about your partner before you make the decision to commit.

Are there other things that are important to you in a relationship? What else do you want or need for your partner before you feel comfortable making a commitment to them? Have you and your partner discussed these items?

***Healthy relationships involve deciding, not sliding. Make sure the relationship is right for you (and your children) before making a commitment.***