

# What Is a Healthy Dating or Marriage Relationship?<sup>1</sup>

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The American author Mignon McLaughlin insightfully stated that “a successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person.” Successful marriages can provide many benefits, including increased economic, physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Institute for American Values, 2002).

Conversely, there are significant potential costs associated with divorce, such as stress, depression, and economic insecurity (Schramm, 2009). High divorce rates may reflect a growing emphasis on personal freedom and self-fulfillment and a dwindling commitment to long-term relationships. Divorce rates may also reflect that marriage is currently viewed as more of a self-actualizing experience with greater expectations for creating and maintaining satisfying relationships (Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Maslow, 1968).

Healthy relationships developed during childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood can provide the building blocks for healthy adult marriage relationships. Approximately 90% of Americans will marry at some point in their lives, so it’s worth the investment of time and effort to build a healthy dating relationship and eventual marriage (Bianchi & Casper, 2000).



Figure 1. The majority of Americans will marry at some point in their lives, making it important to understand what a healthy dating and marriage relationship is.

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## Helpful Information

### Defining a Healthy Romantic Relationship

Defining what a healthy romantic relationship is can be challenging. Thankfully, modern research has given us a good idea of what healthy dating and marriage relationships look like. Take a minute and review the definitions below and determine if they capture what a healthy relationship looks like to you. Then answer the questions in the next section to get an idea of the strengths already present in your relationship and those things you may want to work on.

- **Healthy Marriage** – A stable and satisfying marriage relationship built upon a strong friendship that is safe,

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