Throughout life people engage in many different kinds of relationships including those with friends, significant others, family members, co-workers, and more. Regardless of the type of relationship, communication plays a key role in determining whether the relationship is healthy or unhealthy. Communication involves expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas to others and can be either healthy or unhealthy. Understanding and recognizing the difference between healthy and unhealthy communication is important to one's overall health and well-being.

Signs of a healthy relationship
Healthy relationships involve affection, caring, valuing, trusting, accepting, giving, and joy. These relationships have the opportunity to enrich a person's life by adding to his/her feelings of self-worth and enjoyment. The following are signs that one may be involved in a healthy relationship:

- Feeling secure and comfortable with oneself and others
- Not being subjected to physical, emotional, and/or verbal abuse
- Enjoys spending time with one another
- Being supportive of one another
- Having interest in one another's life
- Trusting one another
- Being sexually involved by choice

Signs of an unhealthy relationship
It is important to keep in mind that in most relationships there are likely to be periods of disagreement, conflict, and frustration. This does not necessarily indicate a relationship is unhealthy. Unhealthy relationships generally involve danger, obsessions, excessiveness, destruction, and dependency. The following are signs that one may be involved in an unhealthy relationship:

- Feeling controlled or manipulated
- Not making time for one another
- Being afraid of one another's temper
- Ignoring one another when he/she is speaking
- Being overly possessive or jealous
- Experiencing physical, emotional, and/or verbal abuse
- Criticizing one another
- Being sexually involved by force

If you feel that you or someone you know is involved in an unhealthy relationship it is important to seek help. There are many resources available (e.g., hotline, counselors, friends) for those who wish to talk about their relationship or that of others. If there are any instances or signs of abuse, it is extremely important to seek help immediately.

Healthy communication
Healthy communication is essential in day-to-day life and is the backbone of good personal relationships. The following communication tips can help create a healthy relationship:

- Respect your partner
- Make time to communicate a priority
- Listen actively
- Maintain good eye contact
- Be honest and do not assume anything; when in doubt ask questions
- Take a time out if things become too intense; however make sure to always come back and discuss the problem
- Do not criticize
- Do not hold grudges
- Communicate clearly and openly

Unhealthy communication
Unhealthy communication can be devastating to a relationship and to the individuals involved. The following are examples of unhealthy communication:

- Showing resentment
- Being inflexible with time and obligations
- Blaming one another and withdrawing emotionally and physically
- Being dishonest
- Talking “at” a person
- Spending more time talking and interrupting than listening
Benefits of a healthy relationship
Healthy relationships can bring happiness and health to one’s life. Studies show that an individual who is happy in his/her relationship is generally happier overall and experiences less stress. Even though every relationship is different, some general tips for making a relationship healthy include:

- Keep expectations realistic
- Communicate openly
- Be flexible
- Take care of yourself
- Be dependable, responsible, and trustworthy
- Fight fair
- Live a balanced life
- Be yourself
- Have self-respect

Reference
- www.ksu.edu (Kansas State University)
- www.goaskalice.columbia.edu (Columbia University)
- www.psc.uc.edu (University of Cincinnati - Division of Student Affairs and Services, Department of Student Services, Psychological Services Center)