



Breaking Up

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Even if you've decided your relationship is abusive or unhealthy, that doesn't mean ending it will be easy.

How to prepare for a breakup

You may feel pressure from your friends and family to just break up with your boyfriend/girlfriend and move on, but it doesn't usually feel that simple.

Here are some things to keep in mind when thinking about breaking up:

- The person you're dating has probably become a huge **part of your life**. You might see more of them now than you do your friends or family. So being scared about feeling lonely after the break up is normal. Talking to friends or finding activities to fill the new time you have may make this easier.
- **You will miss your boyfriend/girlfriend** after you break up, maybe a lot and maybe just on occasion. Even if they've been abusive and controlling, this is normal. Try writing down the reasons you want to end your relationship now and keep them as a reminder for later on.
- If your boyfriend/girlfriend is **controlling and jealous**, they may make a lot of decisions for you. It can take time to adjust to making your own decisions again.
- **You may be scared** to end the relationship. If you are, take that fear seriously. Ending a relationship with an abusive or controlling person is not the same as ending a healthy relationship.

How to break up

Ending an abusive relationship can be difficult and even dangerous. Your boyfriend/girlfriend may become angry and violent - even if they have not been violent in the past. If you are thinking of ending your relationship, consider these safety tips:

- If you don't feel safe, **don't break up in person**. It may seem cruel to break up over the phone or by email, but these ways can provide you the distance needed to stay safe.
- If you decide to break up in person, **consider doing it in a public place**. Have friends or your parents wait for you nearby. Take a cell phone with you if possible.
- Don't try to explain your reasons for ending the relationship **more than once**. There is nothing you can say that will make your ex happy about the break up.
- **Let your friends and parents know** you are ending your relationship, especially if you think your ex will come to your house or try to get you alone.
- If your ex tries to come to your house when you're alone, **don't go to the door**.
- **Trust yourself**. If you feel afraid, you probably have a good reason.
- **Ask for help**. A Peer Advocate at the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline can help you make a plan or locate local resources if you need them.

When it's over

Just because an abusive relationship is over, doesn't mean the risk of violence is over. Here are some tips to stay safe after ending your relationship:

- **Talk with your friends** about what you are going through so they can support you.
- If you can, **tell your parents** what's going on, especially if your ex might come by your home.
- Talk to your **school counselor or a teacher you trust**. Together you might alert security, adjust your class schedule or come up with other ways to make you feel safe.
- **Avoid isolated areas** at school and local hangouts, and don't walk home alone.
- **Stick with a friend at parties** or events you think your ex might attend.
- **Save any threatening or harassing emails or text messages** your ex might send. Set your profile to private on any social networking sites you use and ask your friends to do the same.
- **If you ever feel you're in immediate danger, call 911.**



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Support for a Friend

What would you do if you thought your friend was in an abusive relationship?

Most of the time, violence takes place when the couple is alone. You might not see dramatic warning signs like black eyes and broken bones. So, how can you tell for sure? For one thing, listen to your instincts. You probably wouldn't be worried without good reason.

Here are some **warning signs** to look for that might mean your friend is in trouble and needs your help:

- Their boyfriend/girlfriend calls them names or puts them down in front of others.
- Their boyfriend/girlfriend **acts extremely jealous** when they talk to friends of the opposite sex, even when it is completely innocent.
- Your friend often **cancels plans at the last minute**, for reasons that sound untrue.
- Your friend **frequently apologizes** for their boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Your friend's boyfriend/girlfriend is **constantly checking up** on them, calling or texting, and demanding to know where they have been.
- You've seen the boyfriend/girlfriend **lose their temper**, maybe even get violent when they're mad.
- Your friend is **always worried** about upsetting their boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Your friend is **giving up things** that used to be important to them, such as spending time with friends or other activities, and is becoming more and more isolated.
- Your friend's **weight, appearance or grades** have changed dramatically.
- Your friend has **injuries they can't explain**, or the explanations they give don't add up.

What you can do

Talking with a friend in an abusive relationship can make a big difference to them - whether they are being abused or being abusive. Sometimes, it can be difficult to know what to say or how to say it, especially if you've never dealt with this issue before.

DO:

- **Listen** first to what they have to say.
- Talk to them **in private** and keep what they say confidential.
- Let your friend know **why** you are concerned. **Be specific.** Refer to incidents you have personally witnessed instead of what you have heard from others.
- Offer to get your friend **information**.
- Mention **other people** your friend might talk to - a counselor, a teacher, or another adult they trust.
- Let them know you are **available** to talk more if they need support.
- Give them the **loveisrespect**, National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, number or website address.

DON'T:

- Be judgmental.
- Make them feel stupid or ashamed.
- Ask lots of yes or no questions. Give your friend a chance to talk freely.
- Force your friend to make a decision or give ultimatums. They have to decide when they are ready to get help or end their relationship. You can't do it for them.



Support for your Teen

Parents play a very important role in ending teen dating abuse. Teens in abusive situations truly need the support of their parents. Even in the rockiest parent-teen relationship, the advice of a parent can make a dramatic difference in a teen's life. For that reason, it's imperative that you familiarize yourself with the warning signs of dating abuse and what you can do to help.

How do I recognize the signs?

An abusive person will do various things to control their partner. A teen experiencing abuse may:

- Make **changes** in their daily rituals
- **Retreat** from school or activities
- Experience **isolation** from friends
- Make changes in clothing
- Wear clothing **inappropriate** for the weather in order to hide marks
- Have **visible marks or bruises**
- Spend **excessive** amounts of time with the person they're dating

What can I do to help?

If you notice something has changed, consider talking to your teen:

- Ask questions about your teen's life
- Listen with an open mind
- Support your teen as they decide what to do
- Open up clear channels of communication
- Be calm and take positive action

What else can I do?

Communicate with a trained Peer Advocate at [loveisrespect](http://loveisrespect.org), National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline.

Contact us at **1-866-331-9474 (1-866-331-8453 TTY)** or chat online from 4pm - 2am CST.



Talk to an Abusive Friend

It's hard to talk to a friend when you think his or her behavior is out of control. You want to believe them when they say you've got nothing to worry about, that you're wrong. But if you have seen behavior that makes you think they may be hurting their partner, you owe it to them, and to yourself, to take a stand. It may be the hardest thing you've ever done... but it could make a real difference in all of your lives.

Do

- **Be specific about what you saw**, and how it made you feel. "I didn't like it when you told your girlfriend/ boyfriend they were stupid in front of all of us, and I can only imagine how it made them feel."
- **Take a stand.** "I'm not going to sit here as your friend and watch this happen and not say anything about it."
- **Give them a reality check.** Their abusive actions will have consequences. "This is a crime, and you could be arrested."
- **Urge them to seek help.** He or she can talk to a counselor, a coach, a member of the clergy, any trusted adult - or even an older sibling or mentor.
- **Offer to get information** for your friend.

Don't

- Make them feel ashamed of themselves. You care about your friend, and you want his or her behavior to change. If you didn't think they had it in them to be a decent person, you probably wouldn't be hanging out with them.



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Help for an Abusive Teen

If you think you're abusive and want to change - or even if you're just considering taking steps to change, these tips could be helpful:

- Take responsibility for your actions. Even if your girlfriend or boyfriend sometimes does things you don't like or that make you angry, no one deserves to be abused or controlled.
- Change for yourself first. You may really want to stay in your current relationship, but even if you don't, stopping the abuse will help you in your next relationship.
- Find a friend you can be honest with about your concerns and your plans to change. Ask them to hold you accountable if they see you being abusive.
- Take a break. Try spending some time away from your girlfriend or boyfriend.
- Decide now to walk away from an argument before it escalates. Let your girlfriend/boyfriend know your plan.
- Look at the people around you. If your family or friends are also abusive in their relationships, you may want to find ways to spend less time with them. If that's not possible, at least pay attention to how you feel when you witness others being abused.
- Be patient with yourself. Admitting you want to change your behavior is a huge step; but don't expect things to change overnight.
- Look for a class or counseling locally. Contact loveisrespect, the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline. A Peer Advocate can help you locate local help and talk to you about your concern.