

Listen to your instincts. If you feel afraid, you should have support from a trusted adult when you break up. Your abusive partner may not accept the break up or respect your boundaries, or they may try to control you through guilt, insults, or threats. Consider these tips:

- If you don't feel safe, don't break up in person. It may seem mean to break up over the phone or by text, but it may be the safest way.
- If you break up in person, do it in a public place. Have friends or your parents wait nearby. Take a cell phone with you and have an exit plan in case you need to leave.
- Don't try to explain your reasons for ending the relationship more than once. There is nothing you can say that will make your partner happy with your decision.
- Let your friends and parents know you are ending your relationship, especially if you think your partner will try to come to your house or other places you frequent to confront you when you're alone.

## Where to get help

### Contact your local domestic and sexual violence program

#### National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline:

Text LOVEIS to 22522 or speak to a peer advocate at 1-866-331-9474

#### National Sexual Assault Hotline:

1-800-656-4673

#### Trevor Lifeline (for LGBTQ\* youth):

1-866-488-7386

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

1-800-273-8255 or [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)  
to chat with a crisis counselor online

[www.engagingvoices.org](http://www.engagingvoices.org)

A project of the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence

This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-TA-AX-K019 and 2016-WR-AX-0008 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.

# Breaking Up



## Breaking Up

If you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, figuring out what to do can be hard. You have a history with your partner and you may still have feelings for them.

## Staying Together

If you decide to stay together, make sure you are honest with yourself about your decision. While an unhealthy relationship can become healthy with enough time and dedication, it is unrealistic to expect to "fix" an abusive relationship on your own. Remember, at the end of the day, you can only change your own behavior, not your partner's. Consider when it may be time to re-evaluate the relationship, and who you can call on if you need support.

## When Should You Break Up

You may want to end your relationship if you experience any of the following:

- Lacking contact or emotional connection
- Wanting to be free and more independent
- Keeping secrets or not being honest
- One or both of you are irritable with the other
- Arguments (nothing gets solved, feelings get hurt)
- Feeling happier when you are away from your partner
- Emotional, physical, or sexual abuse

## Breaking up is natural

Relationships are part of life. And as normal as relationships are, break ups are normal too. In many situations, breaking up can actually be better for everyone.

While breaking up with someone is awkward, you can do it in a way that is respectful and best for all involved.

## How to break up:

- Steer clear of blame, while being honest and clear about what you need.
- Avoid bringing up relationship issues in front of the world (like on social media), which may end up complicating things.
- Discuss in a safe setting where you have some privacy (unless you are fearful about their response).
- Stay open and ask yourself what you can learn from the experience.
- Know that if your partner can't seem to be respectful, it's okay to end the conversation – and the relationship – without further discussion.
- It's okay to cry – just don't let the blues keep you from normal activities.
- Allow time and space to heal – avoid making excuses to contact them.