

# LESSON 1: Identifying unhealthy relationship behaviours

## Key Stage: 4

This lesson has been developed in collaboration with the Alice Ruggles Trust to promote awareness of unhealthy relationship behaviours and stalking in order to help protect young people from the potential risks in such situations. Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson for guidance on establishing ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, communication and handling questions effectively.

Learning Objectives	By the end of the lesson, we will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assess whether relationship behaviours are healthy or unhealthy</li><li>• explain strategies to effectively manage relationship break ups</li><li>• suggest ways to support a friend who is in an unhealthy relationship</li></ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Box or envelope for anonymous questions</li><li>• Paper and pens</li><li>• Resource 1: Attitudes snapshot [1 copy between 2-3 students]</li><li>• Resource 2: Make up or breakup scenarios [1 copy printed on A3]</li></ul>
<b>Introduction</b> <span>5 Mins</span>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revisit or introduce ground rules.</li><li>• Introduce the learning objectives and outcomes.</li></ul>
<b>Baseline relationship behaviours attitude snapshots</b> <span>10 Mins</span>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give out Resource 1: Attitude snapshots and ask how far students agree or disagree with each statement. Students could annotate the full hand out or focus on particular characters.</li><li>• Detailed teacher notes are provided to support feedback. It is important to explain that different people have different boundaries and views on what is/is not acceptable but there are some behaviours that are clearly wrong and may even be illegal. We must listen to others to make sure we are not acting in away that makes them feel unsafe.</li><li>• Use the class's responses to inform your approach to the lesson. Address any gaps in understanding which have been identified and challenge unhealthy attitudes as appropriate.</li></ul>
<b>Make up or break up scenarios</b> <span>15 Mins</span>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In groups of 4-5, students should discuss a scenario from Resource 2: Make up or break up scenarios. Ask class to give advice to their character by writing notes around the situation. In particular, if they identify any controlling behaviours, they should suggest actions the person in the scenario could take to manage the situation.</li><li>• After a few minutes, ask students to pass the sheet to the next table. Each table should then review the scenario and comments then add any extra thoughts—including comments.</li><li>• which may contradict what has already been said. This should be repeated until all tables have seen all 5 scenarios and the sheets have been returned to the original groups.</li><li>• Collect in the sheets and check whether students have covered the key points and have agreed on key messages. Ensure any omissions or differences of opinion are covered using the guidance in the teacher notes.</li></ul>

- Collect in the sheets and check whether students have covered the key points and have agreed on key messages. Ensure any omissions or differences of opinion are covered using the guidance in the teacher notes.
- Next, ask students to choose one scenario and decide what they could do if a friend was behaving in this potentially controlling way towards their partner. Ensure students consider their own safety as well as sources of further support.
- During feedback, explain that the same power and control dynamic seen in unhealthy relationships is often present in stalking situations. If there is a risk of a difficult break-up, it's best the person is encouraged to seek further help to manage the situation to keep all parties safe.

**Support:** Use a highlighter to show the controlling behaviours in each scenario.

**Extension:** Write a response to each situation as if it were a question on an online forum.

## Head, heart, hands

10 Mins

- Explain that when a relationship ends, people can feel a whole range of feelings. Sometimes there can be quite difficult feelings which in some cases can contribute to a person acting in unhealthy ways.

Ask students to sketch a person outline and add:

- Head – what a person might be thinking after a breakup
- Heart – what a person might be feeling after a breakup
- Hands – how a person might be acting and relating to others after a breakup

**N.B** This could be an emotional activity for those who have experienced a recent or difficult breakup (either themselves or family members) so ensure an alternative is provided, e.g. create a leaflet covering 3 top sources of support for people managing a difficult breakup.

- Feedback on common themes and discuss the spectrum of potential attitudes towards a breakup e.g. relief, looking forward to finding a new partner, sad but enjoying more time with friends, through to feeling very depressed, embarrassed, hurt or rejected. Reassure the class that it is 'normal' to feel any of a range of different emotions, but that where difficult feelings occur it may be appropriate to seek help, and it is not acceptable for those feelings to translate into unhealthy behaviours towards others.
- Next, ask students to use a different colour pen and provide advice and guidance for the more difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours they identified, including sources of support. This should include consideration of actions if someone has any impulses to act in unhealthy ways.

Feedback could include:

- Reassurance around breakups and the associated feelings being very common. The importance of avoiding internalising rejection – when someone breaks up with a partner, they are saying the person is not right for them but this does not mean there is something 'wrong' or 'inadequate' with the other person. People seek different things in a relationship.
- Reflection on what didn't work out in a relationship can help us to learn. However, assertions that a person will change fundamental things about themselves or their behaviour in order to stay in a relationship should be considered cautiously.
- Actions which try to get 'revenge' or seek to upset someone are unacceptable. Any compulsions to do so should be discussed with a trusted person.
- It is common for people to review ex partner's social media posts following a breakup but this is unlikely to be healthy in the long-term. If a person doing so begins to misuse any information they see, this is unacceptable and potentially illegal behaviour.
- It is common to want to contact someone after a breakup – think about the boundaries the ex-partner has put in place before deciding to do so. If they said they did not want to speak to someone again, this should be respected.

Share sources of support and explain the kinds of help they provide and how to access them.

- **Police 999 in an emergency or 101** for further support and advice
- **Suzy Lamplugh Trust's National Stalking Helpline:** 0808802 0300 – email support is also available, along with an online information tool linking to local services
- **Respect Phoneline:** 0808 802 4040 <https://respectphoneline.org.uk/> – support those exhibiting controlling behaviours
- **Women's Aid 24-hour National Domestic Violence Freephone Helpline** 0808 2000 247
- **Men's Advice Line** supports men with controlling partners 0808 801 0327
- **The Mix** has further information aimed at young people

Ask the class to summarise how people can help if a friend is in an unhealthy relationship – either as the person being controlling or facing coercion from their partner. Class should come up with 3 clear suggestions for each. Students could use the baseline statements as a focus for their work. Ensure students consider the safety of bystanders in their answers. Use the class' answers to assess lesson progress and identify any remaining misconceptions.

When feeding back, ensure awareness that harassment, stalking and relationship abuse are illegal and that the police can be contacted in such cases.

Feedback could include:

If someone sees a friend engaging in controlling behaviours:

- Friends can pull them aside and say that their behaviour is unhealthy.
- They can suggest seeking support with managing their behaviour e.g. counsellor, support services.
- They can support their friend's partner by warning them if they think they are at risk.
- They can report a friend's behaviour to police if they feel their friend's partner is at risk.

If someone is worried their friend is in a controlling relationship:

- Help their friend to identify the unhealthy behaviours and help them recognise they are not 'normal' things they need to put up with.
- Suggest they seek support from specialist services and/or the police.
- Ring the police directly if they consider a friend to be in immediate danger.
- Provide a place to go if they need to exit a situation quickly.
- HOWEVER, it is important to stress that some people who exhibit controlling behaviours can directly target those they see as intervening. It is very important that bystanders protect their own safety too – this will ultimately mean they are better able to support their friends.

## Healthy Relationship Behaviours

## Extension

Ask students to list all the things that might make a person feel happy and safe in a relationship. They could then nominate their top 5 most important behaviours in a relationship.