

Breaking up safely

School/College/Youth group

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Staying with someone you are no longer happy with does more harm than good, especially when unhealthy behaviours are present. All relationships have their ups and downs, but if there are more downs than ups, then it's time to leave. Here are some tips for knowing it's time to leave:

1. You would rather not hang out with your partner. Being independent is a good thing. Having time away from each other to be yourself, see your friends and explore your interests makes for a healthy relationship. But when you would rather do anything than hang out with your partner, that's a sign that something is wrong.

2. Your partner is into you one minute and ignoring you the next. This kind of hot/cold or push/pull dynamic is a way of manipulating people and can leave you feeling very insecure and confused. You don't need that in your life.

3. Cheating – if you experience sexual, emotional, cyber or text cheating it's a sign of betrayal. While you might be able to work hard to forgive it once, it's definitely grounds to break up if you feel unable to move on, or cheating happens more than once.

4. Know the 10 signs of an unhealthy relationship – for example, manipulation, volatility, belittling and isolation. If you can identify one or more of the 10 unhealthy signs in your partner's behaviour, it's time to consider getting out. Left unchecked, all of these behaviours can escalate into physical or emotional abuse.

5. If you are fearful of your partner's reactions and have changed your behaviour to suit them, it is time to make a safety plan and break up safely. Feeling fearful, on edge, as if you are walking on eggshells, not wanting to rock the boat, and giving in to your partner's whims and wishes are all signs that you are in an abusive relationship. (There are different types of abuse, physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial and digital. If you want to know more go to [refuge.org.uk](https://www.refuge.org.uk))

If you are in an abusive relationship, you need to make a safety plan before you break up.

Visit [lmkletmeknow.org/get-help](https://www.lmkletmeknow.org/get-help) for a list of organisations that can give you urgent help, support and advice.

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Safety plan

What is a safety plan?

A safety plan is a personalised strategy to remove yourself from potentially dangerous situations. A plan should be unique to the relationship and designed to make sure that you are leaving in a safe and healthy way.

Why is it important?

If you are in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, it's crucial that you create a breakup plan, whether you are planning to leave or stay. The most dangerous time in an abusive relationship is during a breakup and after you have left your partner. During this period, your partner might escalate their aggression to keep you from leaving. It is especially important that you take precautionary measures to keep yourself as safe as possible.

Remember...

Breakup plans can be altered and changed as time goes on. If you're concerned about how your partner might react to a breakup, start your plan by answering a few basic questions and add more safety measures, if you feel increasingly threatened.

If you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, know that the abuse is not your fault and that you deserve to feel safe. Asking for help to leave a relationship that no longer makes you happy or threatens your safety is a sign of strength, and there's no weakness in leaning on people and resources around you. You don't have to be in immediate crisis to use these resources. Preparation is key to keeping yourself as safe as possible.



Seeking information and advice from professional bodies such as the National Domestic Abuse Helpline (nationaldahelpline.org.uk), National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline (galop.org.uk), National Centre for Domestic Violence (ncdv.org.uk), local domestic violence services, the police or your doctor can help you leave a relationship safely and support you to live a life free from abuse.

Tips for Breaking Up Safely

Abusive relationships

- Don't tell your partner in advance that you intend to break up with them.
- Use professional organisations to plan leaving safely – they are trained to assess your situation and help you plan accordingly. (Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247)
- Save screenshots of threatening communication from your partner, police reports, A&E visits related to injuries caused by your partner, etc. as evidence of any abuse.
- Identify your support system early and lean on them when necessary.



Unhealthy relationships

- Let your friends, parents, or a trusted adult know that you're ending a relationship, especially if you think your ex will try to confront you when you're alone.
- If you don't feel safe, don't break up in person. Sometimes the safest way to break up is by phone or social media, even if it feels impersonal or cruel.
- If you break up in person, always do it in a public place. Have friends or parents nearby and take a mobile phone with you if you have one.



If you are in immediate danger call 999 to seek protection.

Questions to consider

if you are at school or college

- Do I need to have my class timetable or locker changed? Who do I go to for this?
- What teachers or sports coaches do I need to inform about the breakup to make my safety at school a priority?
- Am I walking to my car, driving home, walking from the bus by myself at any point throughout the day? Who can I ask to accompany me during these times?
- Do I spend any time at home alone before my parents, guardians, siblings get home?
- Do I have a place I can go if I feel my house isn't safe - a neighbour, grandparent, or friend?
- What public area can I go to instead during this time?
- What is the safest way to get to and from school or college?
- Who do I go to if my partner has threatened to physically harm themselves or me? You must always report any threats to harm you, themselves or others to the police immediately.
- Do I have a list of phone numbers written and stored somewhere safe?



- Will they contact my family or friends to find out where I am? If this is a possibility, ask friends and family never to disclose my location, routine, place of work.
- Do they have access to my virtual location - FindMyFriends, FindMyiPhone?
- Do they know any of my online passwords?
- Where can I save documentation of abusive, threatening, or harassing comments, posts, texts, and photos of physical abuse?
- If you have sent intimate images or sexted photos in the past, you have the right to ask for them back. Any threat to use or share images without your consent is an offence and must be reported to the police immediately.
- Who are the counsellors at my school or college, and where are their offices/contact details?
- Who can I call if I feel overwhelmed or need additional support?

