

Is It a Healthy Relationship?

Overview

This lesson offers guidance on how to tell if a relationship is healthy. Utilizing a clear, three-question framework that defines six types of relationships, participants will create sculptures to analyze what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like in the real world. The goal is for participants to develop a deeper understanding of the differences and be able to develop communication skills for discussing healthy and unhealthy relationships. A self-assessment exercise helps participants examine their own relationships.

The importance of fun in keeping healthy relationships alive and well will also be explored. Youth will be encouraged to generate a list of fun activities to do with friends or partners.

Most young people will experience relationships that don't work. Issues surrounding breaking up are addressed in the final section. Issues include knowing when it's time, how to begin, and moving forward with life after a breakup. Special attention will be given to young parents because their issues may be more complicated.

Goals

- To analyze the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships
- To demonstrate using a three-question guide in assessing a relationship
- To develop a list of fun activities to keep a relationship strong
- To analyze the issues around breaking up
- To offer additional tips to young parents who break up

Lesson at a Glance

6.1 How Can You Tell? (35 minutes)

Activities: *Relationship Sculptures; Words that Tell; Assessing Relationships*

6.2 Having Fun—It's Important! (5–10 minutes)

Activity: *Fun Brainstorm*

6.3 Breaking Up (22 minutes)

Activities: *Stay Together or Break Up?; Moving Ahead After a Breakup; Tips for Parents; Breakup Songs*

Trusted Adult Connection



Materials Checklist

Resources:

- 6a. *Six Types of Relationships* activity cards (class set): (**Locate colored cards in back of manual.**) Cut cards. Duplicate masters can be downloaded at DibbleInstitute.org/LN4.
- 6b. *Healthy or Unhealthy* activity cards (class set): (**Locate colored cards in back of manual.**) Cut cards. Duplicate masters can be downloaded at DibbleInstitute.org/LN4.
- 6c. *Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships* handout (pg. 126) (Duplicate, one per person.)
- 6d. *Breaking Up Tips* handout (pg. 127)
- 6e. *Surviving a Breakup* handout (pg. 128)
- 6f. *Tips for Parents* handout (pg. 129) (optional)

Materials:

- Lesson 6 PowerPoint slideshow and all duplicate masters for activity cards are digital downloads that come with the curriculum. Easy-to-follow directions are found at DibbleInstitute.org/LN4.
- Sculpting materials
 - Play-Doh—six containers or more if tiny ones
 - Pipe cleaners

- Popsicle/craft sticks
- Miniature marshmallows or sugar spice drop candy
- Toothpicks
- Flip chart/large Post-it paper and markers
- Music

Workbook Application:

- *Is It a Healthy Relationship?* (pgs. 19–20)

 **Preparation**

- ✓ Read through the lesson to be familiar with the three-question guide utilized for gauging the health of relationships.
- ✓ Preview the Lesson 6 PowerPoint Presentation—especially to see the pictures and descriptions of sculptures constructed by past groups. Also see alternative activity ideas.
- ✓ Locate colored *Six Types of Relationships* activity cards (Resource 6a). **Colored activity cards in back of manual. Cut.**
- ✓ Gather sculpting materials. (Materials are reusable)
- ✓ Locate colored *Healthy or Unhealthy* activity cards (Resource 6b). **Colored activity cards in back of manual. Cut.**
- ✓ Review the workbook application *Is It a Healthy Relationship?* (pgs. 19–20).
- ✓ Duplicate *Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships* (Resource 6c, pg. 126), *Breaking Up Tips* (Resource 6d, pg. 127), *Surviving a Breakup* (Resource 6e, pg. 128), and *Tips for Parents* (Resource 6f, pg. 129). Decide which you will distribute.

SECTION 6.1

How Can You Tell?

(PP) This section offers participants a clear three-question framework to utilize in determining whether a relationship is healthy or unhealthy. A fun sculpting activity based on those three questions will help participants explore more deeply what a healthy relationship is and what it is not. The sculpting activity and a brief *Words that Tell* activity continue to build language skills for discussing healthy relationships. Finally, participants use a self-assessment exercise in the workbook to analyze their own relationships.

- Resource 6a: *Six Types of Relationships* activity cards
- Resource 6b: *Healthy or Unhealthy* activity cards
- Workbook: *Is It a Healthy Relationship?* (pgs. 19–20)
- Music
- Sculpting materials

35 minutes



Lesson 6
Is It a Healthy Relationship?

Begin this section with these points:

- ❖ *Today we're going to explore the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships a little deeper.*
- ❖ *Sometimes the differences may not be clear. If you haven't seen many good models of healthy relationships, it might be hard to know if one is healthy or unhealthy.*
- ❖ *So, how can one tell if the relationship is healthy and worth staying in?*

Announce that you are going to present three essential questions that can be asked to determine if a relationship is healthy.

- ❖ *There are three questions you can ask to determine if a relationship is healthy. They are simple, but important, and have to be answered honestly about how it feels deep down inside. If you do, you will know if the relationship is healthy or not. These questions can apply to romantic relationships and friendships.*

Use the PowerPoint slides or write the following on a flip chart/board: (PP)

How Does It Feel? Ask 3 Questions

Unhealthy	←→	Healthy
• Conditional?	or	• Unconditional?
• Controlling or Disrespectful?	or	• Respectful, Equal, and Supportive?
• Mostly about Sex, Material Things? Selfish?	or	• Attraction on Many Levels? Giving

HOW DOES IT FEEL?		
UNHEALTHY		HEALTHY
1. Conditional?	or	Unconditional?
2. Controlling? Disrespectful?	or	Equal, respectful, and supportive?
3. Mostly sexual/material?	or	Attraction on many levels?

Activity: Relationship Sculptures

Announce they will now do a fun activity to explore six different types of relationships—three are healthy and three are unhealthy. The questions about how it feels deep down have to be answered honestly.

1. *Does this relationship feel **conditional**—like you are genuinely liked, even with your imperfections?*
2. *Does it feel **disrespectful** or **controlling**? Or does it feel **respectful**, **equal**, and **supportive**?*
3. *Does it feel like the relationship is mostly about **sex**, **status**, or **material things**? Or does the attraction feel like it's on **many levels**?*

Divide participants into six groups and distribute one card (*Six Types of Relationships*, Resource 6a) to each group. Each card describes one of the relationship types. Have sculpting supplies in a central area for the group to use. If you have a very small group, three groups can do two sculptures each—one for each of the contrasting types. **Give directions: (PP)**

❖ *Each group has a card that describes one of the six types of relationships. Have one person read the card aloud and then discuss. Really think about the relationships you may have seen like this among your peers or the adults you know in your life.*

- *Have any of you ever seen a relationship like this. What behaviors do you see?*

Sculpting Activity

1. Read and discuss the card:
 - Is it healthy or unhealthy?
 - Have you seen any relationships like this in real life?
 - What behaviors would be seen in that type of relationship?
 - How would it feel if you were in this relationship?
2. Brainstorm symbols, images or scenes that would represent this kind of relationship.
3. Make a sculpture to represent it.

- *What is it like to be around this couple?*
- *If you were in that type of relationship how would it feel?*
- ❖ *After a short discussion, get materials (play dough, pipe cleaners, craft sticks, toothpicks, and spice drops) and make a sculpture that represents that relationship.*
- ❖ *Have fun. This isn't about great art or making things look real. Use your imagination. Think about symbols and images. Let me give you examples of what some past groups have done.*
- ❖ **(PP)** *For the **controlling/disrespectful** relationship, here is a sculpture one group made. Read the descriptions off the slide.*

Note: There are more examples at the end of the slide show you can choose from. It's enough to show one, then put up the instructions. **(PP)**



Let them know they will have ten minutes to work. Play music while they work. Call a five-minute and then a one-minute warning to keep them on track.

Processing the activity:

When finished, the entire group should **get up from their seats and travel** from sculpture to sculpture. Ask the others if they can guess if this is a healthy or unhealthy relationship; then ask to see how they interpret the sculpture. (i.e. What do they see?)

Then ask the creators to interpret their sculpture—to explain each feature.

Use the descriptions of their sculptures as a springboard for discussion. Finally, and most importantly, ask one of the group members (who likes to read aloud) to read the title and bullets on their card to the entire group (or instructor can). We want everyone to hear the descriptions on each card. Below are some points to aid your discussion.

- ❖ *Controlling relationships can evolve into abusive ones. Everyone should be on the lookout for danger signs or red flags if a relationship feels at all controlling or disrespectful.*

- ❖ *It is not okay for a boyfriend or girlfriend to make you feel bad, call you names, put you down, or disrespect you. A healthy relationship means the other person makes you feel good and encourages the best in you.*

Take photographs of each sculpture. Ask each group to jot down what each feature meant. Consider making posters to put up in public areas with pictures of each sculpture with their descriptions (like you see in the PowerPoints) and a copy of the card underneath. It honors their work and educates other youth in their school or community program.

Alternate Activity Options:

In lieu of making sculptures, you can consider having participants divide up into groups, each with a card, and do one of the following:

- Write a short skit based on the scenario to act out. Ask the group to act it out and see if the audience can guess what type of relationship it is.
- Write a rap, a poem, or a spoken word piece to perform.
- Make a drawing to represent the type of relationship on their card.

Whichever option is used, it's important to have each group read their card aloud to everyone and have every group show or perform their work.

Activity: Words that Tell

The goal of this brief activity is to continue to build vocabulary for talking about healthy and unhealthy relationships. Shuffle the colored activity cards *Healthy or Unhealthy* (Resource 6b) found in the back of the manual. **(PP)**

- ❖ *I'm holding a stack of cards with a word on each one.*
- ❖ *As I say the word and hold up the card, I'd like you to shout out if you think it goes in the healthy or unhealthy relationship pile.*

What does this word say to you?
Is the relationship:

HEALTHY?
or UNHEALTHY?

Forms of Safety that Define Healthy Relationships

Ask the group if they agree or disagree with this statement: *“Feeling safe in a relationship is the ultimate test of a healthy relationship.”*

❖ **(PP) Physical Safety:** *Typically what first comes to mind when we think safety is physical safety. It would be easy to come up with examples of what it means to be physically unsafe. But what about emotional safety?*

❖ **Emotional Safety** (advance slide): *Can you think of any examples? This kind of safety comes from being accepted and free to be yourself. You feel safe to say what’s on your mind and in your heart. The ability to be honest and open brings a sense of emotional safety and connection and is important in developing a healthy relationship.*

❖ **Trust & Commitment Safety** (advance slide): *This safety comes from knowing your partner will be there for you. They’ve got your back and are reliable. There is a belief that you can have a future with this person. Not every teen or young adult relationship does or even should get to this level; but like the pyramid activity, these levels of safety build on each other to create strong, healthy, and safe relationships.*

❖ *Trust and commitment require physical and emotional safety. As we discussed before, there are a lot of important factors that go into building a relationship and **time** is one of them. Trust and commitment safety come with time, as we deepen our knowledge of another person.*

Healthy Relationships are Safe

- Physical Safety
- Emotional Safety
- Trust and Commitment Safety



Feeling SAFE in a relationship is the ultimate test of a healthy relationship!

Activity: Assessing Relationships

Ask participants to locate *Is It a Healthy Relationship?* (pgs. 19–20) in the workbook. Introduce:

❖ *In this exercise you will have the opportunity to assess your relationship.*

- ❖ *For those not in a relationship, you can either assess a past relationship or a relationship of someone you know well.*
- ❖ *Either way, it will offer you insights and help you think more about the behaviors that represent a healthy relationship.*

(PP) Instruct participants to read the introduction and then to notice the three continuums from red (unhealthy) to green (healthy). After reading each set of questions, they are to mark an “X” on each scale to indicate where the relationship falls (or fell) in the category. After they finish the assessment, instruct them to describe three behaviors that are personally important and which place a relationship firmly in the healthy green zone.

Relationship Assessment



Unhealthy Healthy

- Ask 3 questions about a relationship.
- Assess it. Put an “X” on the line somewhere between healthy and unhealthy.
- Write down three behaviors important to you for a healthy relationship.

SECTION 6.2

Having Fun— It’s Important!

In this very brief section, participants will learn that having fun and continuing to have fun is actually pretty important to successful and healthy relationships. Participants will brainstorm and share ideas for fun. **(PP)**

Introduce the idea of why fun is so important to healthy relationships:

- ❖ *Having fun, believe it or not, is very important to a satisfying relationship.*
- ❖ *When friends or couples have fun experiences, it creates a positive bond, strengthens the good feelings for each other. Making time for fun also relieves stress and helps us deal with life.*

- Markers and flip chart/large Post-it paper

5–10 minutes

Having Fun is Important!



Explain what often happens to fun later on:

- ❖ *Most new friends and couples start out doing fun things. Then, as life gets busy, people often let time for fun slip away.*
- ❖ *It can be tough to find free time with work, school, responsibilities, and children. But here's a question: How do we use the free time that we do have?*
- ❖ *It is easy to slide into watching a lot of TV, streaming videos, playing video games, or glued to our social media apps. We could decide to spend some of that precious free time having fun with a partner, friends, family, or a child.*
- ❖ *There is nothing against TV or computer games, or social media, but it can be awfully easy to make them the major thing we do.*
- ❖ *Did you know research shows people are happiest when they are out doing things, spending time with others, or working on some hobby or interest?*
- ❖ *People that make the effort to do fun things together, no matter how busy life gets, are rewarded. They feel more alive, more connected, and have more rewarding relationships.*
- ❖ *Research on happiness and fun also tells us it is important to do different things—to mix it up. A great idea is to try out new activities for keeping fun alive.*

Activity: Fun Brainstorm

(PP) Divide into groups of four and announce there will be a three-minute competition. Each group is to brainstorm a list of ideas of fun things to do with a partner or friend according to two criteria: cost and time. Some ideas should be free, some should cost just a little, and others can cost more. Some fun ideas should take less than a half hour, an evening, all afternoon, the whole day, or longer. Tell them to mix it up and strive for variety, fun, and creativity. But they all must come up with some fun ideas that are free.

Brainstorm Fun Ideas

Create a list of ideas according to:

- **Cost:** Free, low-cost, medium-cost, and a few higher price tag
- **Time:** 15 minutes to half hour, an hour or two, an evening, an afternoon, whole day and a weekend. And, don't forget to throw in a dream idea or two.
- **Variety:** Mix it up—don't always do the same thing. Try new things.

When time is up, look at the lists. As groups report their ideas for fun, instruct participants to jot down or make a mental note of the ones they like. Take a vote on which group came up with the most creative ideas. Throw out treats to the winning group first, then to everyone for participating. **(PP)** Put up final slide with reminders. **Note:** This activity can be assigned to do out of session if time is limited.

SECTION 6.3

Breaking Up

- Resource 6c: *Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships* handout (pg. 126)
- Resource 6d: *Breaking Up Tips* (pg. 127)
- Resource 6e: *Surviving a Breakup* (pg. 128)
- Resource 6f: *Tips for Parents* (pg. 129)

22 Minutes

This section looks at many of the issues surrounding breaking up: how to decide, why it happens, better and worse ways to end it, and moving forward after a breakup. Special tips are offered for young parents. **(PP)**

Introduce the topic:

- ❖ *There is a quote that says, "People are in your life for a **reason**, a **season**, or a **lifetime**." Not every friendship or romantic relationship is meant to last.*
- ❖ *This program has given you the opportunity to learn more about yourself, recognize what you want and expect, and how to behave in a way that gives you a voice and a choice.*
- ❖ *Just like there are healthy and unhealthy ways to start a relationship, there are healthy and unhealthy ways to end one.*
- ❖ *How do you know when it's time, how will you end it, and how will you move on?*

Breaking Up

- Is It Time?
- How to Do It?
- Moving Forward



Activity: Stay Together or Break Up?

❖ *Let's look at a few situations. Give your opinion by shouting out "stay together" or "break up."*

Situations to read aloud: (PP)

1. Your partner lies to you repeatedly. If caught in the lie, there's an apology. It happens again and again.
2. He only treats you nicely in private. In the house it's, "I love you, baby," but in public he ignores you or talks crudely to you. At the mall, he has a habit of pointing out hot women and asks why you can't look like that.
3. Your partner is nice, but truthfully you've started to like someone else. (*See commentary below.)
4. You see your partner isn't perfect and you have some disagreements.
5. Your feelings have changed. You just don't feel the same about him or her as you did the first few weeks.
6. You want your partner to stop drinking and he/she is getting help to do so.
7. The two of you are fighting more and more and are unable to really talk things out. Your partner refuses to work on communication skills. Also, your partner puts you down. Arguments feel scary sometimes.
8. Your partner's feelings are stronger than yours. She or he is pushing for a level of commitment you don't feel or want yet.
9. You feel smothered by the relationship, and your partner tries to keep you from doing important things.

Stay Together or Break Up?

1. Your partner has lied to you. If caught in the lie, there's an apology. It happens again and again.
2. He only treats you well in private. In the house it's, "I love you, baby," but in public he ignores you or talks crudely to you. At the mall he has a habit of pointing out hot women and asks why you don't look that way.
3. Your partner is nice, but truthfully you've really started to like someone else.
4. You see your partner isn't perfect and you have some disagreements.

Stay Together or Break Up?

5. Your feelings have changed. You just don't feel the same as you did in the first few weeks.
6. You want your partner to stop drinking and he/she is getting help to do so.
7. The two of you are fighting more and more and are unable to talk things out. Your partner puts you down. Arguments feel scary sometimes.
8. Your partner's feelings are stronger than yours. He or she is pushing for a level of commitment that you don't feel or want yet.
9. You feel smothered by the relationship. Your partner tries to keep you from doing important things.

***Commentary on situation three:**

- ❖ *It could be you've gotten to know each other better, the love chemicals have settled, and you've discovered you two are not a good match. Moving on may be wise.*
- ❖ *On the other hand, know that in even the best marriages people can find someone else attractive at times. It is natural and normal.*
- ❖ *Acting on a periodic attraction is entirely something else. If you love someone and are committed, don't put yourself in compromising situations that might take you down the path of cheating (e.g. seeing them alone, pouring out your heart or listening to them pour their heart out to you).*
- ❖ *Going to deeper levels of emotional intimacy when you feel some chemistry will definitely put you on the path to cheating. And, when children are involved, it's not just betraying your partner, but cheating on your child.*
- ❖ *Most affairs do not start with the first kiss. They start with emotional intimacy—sharing what's in your heart with someone with whom you feel some chemistry. Work on greater intimacy with your partner. If you are having difficulties, pour your heart out to a wise person who does not have sexual chemistry with you.*

Discussion: Common Reasons for Breakups

Point out that one of the most common reasons for people breaking up is that one or both persons' feelings change: (PP)

- ❖ *After the love chemicals settle down a bit, it becomes clear what you see in each other. You may decide you really don't fit as a couple. You may have vastly different priorities or interests. It's not either one's fault. Your personalities just don't work together.*
- ❖ *Or, after the chemistry settles a bit, you may discover problem behaviors. You may detect issues or problems that make it difficult to have a relationship. One or both of you may need to devote some time to your own development and addressing your issues.*

Common Reasons for Breakups

- Feelings change
- After the love chemicals settle, you see each other more clearly and find you just don't fit as a couple
- Or, you may detect problem behaviors
- You just want the freedom to date other people and not get so involved or committed at this stage in your life.

- ❖ *It's smart to take your time before getting too involved. It is even more important if you already have a child. It is hard on children to drag them in and out of your relationships.*
- ❖ *Although two people may like each other, one may simply not be ready for that level of commitment. He or she still wants to experience other people and places and doesn't want to close the door to dating other people.*

Brainstorm: Better and Worse Ways

Once you decide to break up, make a plan. There are better and worse ways to break up. Conduct a quick brainstorm. Ask the group to quickly identify some really bad ways to break up. Don't spend too much time. Just get some examples. Add the following if needed: (PP)

- Get a friend to tell him or her
- Do it through a text message
- Change your Facebook status before telling the partner
- Send a Snapchat or Instagram of you and someone else
- Wait for a fight and give them the blame
- Do things to make him or her break up with you
- Ignore him or her in the hope that they'll get the message
- Be seen with another person, or worse, get involved with his or her best friend
- Say, "We can still see each other, but let's just be friends."

How many have heard this to cover up the truth, "I'm just not that into you"? It can give someone false hope. Is this fair? If one person still desires a relationship, just being friends can be torture.

Discussion: Breakup Tips

Pass out the handout *Breaking Up Tips* (Resource 6d, pg. 127) or use the PowerPoint slide and briefly review: (PP)

Really Bad Ways to Break Up

- Get a friend to tell him or her.
- Wait for a fight and then blame him/her.
- Do it through a text.
- Send a Snap of you and someone else
- Don't say anything, but change your Facebook status.
- Just ignore him/her.
- Be seen with another person.
- Go out with his/her best friend.
- Say, "We can still see each other, but let's just be friends."



Brainstorm

Breakup Tips

- Talk to a caring and trusted adult.
- Pick a time and place.
- Make a clean break. Be honest.
- Avoid cruelty. Say what you appreciate about him/her.
- **Caution:** If a person threatens to harm or even to kill him or herself if you break up, you must reach out to parents, his or her parents, school counselor, or another caring adult.



1. Talk to a trusted and wise person: Discuss the reasons the relationship does not work. If they encourage drama, chasing after him or her in a desperate way, or won't keep your conversation private, they are not wise or a person to trust. Tell friends and family when you're ending it. If you have any concerns for your safety or how the person will react, ask a trusted adult to assist you.

2. Pick a time and place to tell the person yourself: Do not break up in front of his or her friends. The person may become emotional. They may cry, be angry, or want to talk. Give him or her the respect privacy provides. Don't tell the person right before a big event such as their birthday, a game, performance, or the start of the school or workday. A good time is a Saturday or Friday after school or work. This will give you both time to process it and to talk to supportive people. Be sure to tell the person yourself.

Caution: If you think the person may become violent, break up in a safe place. There should be helpful people nearby and present. Seek support and advice from the local domestic violence group to develop a safety plan if you are afraid of your ex.

3. Make a clean break: Don't put it off. Spell it out clearly. Be honest and direct, but not cruel. Say: "I want to break up. This relationship is over." Or, "I do not have the same feelings anymore." Do not string someone along. And remember, you do not have to argue or convince the person. Your feelings are your own.

4. Have a method to avoid cruelty: Include in your conversation what you like and appreciate about the other person. But don't give false hope or mixed messages about your decision.

5. Caution: If a person threatens to harm, or even to kill him or herself, if you break up, you must reach out for help. Their threat may make you feel guilty, scared, or angry; but you can and should still end things. Even though this is emotional blackmail to make you feel responsible and not break up, this threat has to be taken seriously. This is why you must reach out to your parents, his or her parents, a school counselor, or another caring adult for help in handling this. The national suicide crisis hotline is 1-800-273-8255. If there is immediate danger, call 911.

Moving Ahead After a Breakup

After a breakup, it is important to have a reality check. Most people will have heartbreaks. Very few people avoid experiencing a breakup at some point either as a teenager or later in life. This is an important section. Some young people go through a serious emotional spiral down—leading to depression and even suicide—after a breakup.

Point out that it is natural to feel strongly:

- ❖ *Go ahead and cry. Crying is a great way to release your strong emotions.*
- ❖ *It's normal to feel miserable when someone has dumped you.*
- ❖ *Pick a good shoulder on which to cry. Find a person you can trust; a wise person who has some perspective to offer you. A wise person will not encourage you to chase after your ex or engage in the revenge game.*

Briefly review *Surviving a Breakup* handout (Resource 6e, pg. 128). **(PP)**

1. **Don't blame yourself.** There are many reasons why relationships end. Make a list of your positive qualities. Ultimately, you want a partner who admires you, recognizes your qualities, is as crazy about you as you are of him or her, and accepts the real you. Make a list of what you want in a partner. What can you learn from this relationship? Are there things you need to work on to build yourself up?
2. **Face reality—it's over.** Don't be obsessed with winning this person back. You can't force a relationship. It sacrifices your dignity to beg for a relationship, to act desperate, or to try to chase after the person.
3. **Stay away from the revenge game.** Forget about getting even or spreading rumors. It's immature and makes you a small person.

Surviving a Breakup

- Don't blame yourself.
- Face reality—it's over.
- Stay away from the revenge game.
- Get perspective.
- Don't jump into a new relationship.
- Get busy. Get out and get going with life.
- Remember, things get better with time.
- **Caution:** If you are depressed and crying several weeks or months later, seek out a parent, trusted adult, or school counselor to help you deal with emotions and gain perspective.



4. **Get perspective.** Many people go through a number of romances. This is part of life. With each relationship you can grow wiser and more insightful about yourself, what you are looking for, and how a relationship should be. Talking with a caring, older person who has more life under their belt might give you some valuable perspective.
5. **Don't jump quickly into another relationship.** Some people hop into another relationship right away to make their ex-partner jealous or to make themselves feel better. This only leads to more problems and is not good if you have a child. Give yourself time. Identify what you want to work on and do for yourself.
6. **Get out and do things.** After you've given yourself time to cry, get busy. Don't wallow in self-pity. Shoot baskets or kick a ball; go walking, biking, or fishing. Take up a hobby. Get outside. Sunshine and the outdoors can be healing. Getting active will make you feel better and put you in a position to meet new people. Call friends and make plans.
7. **Remember, things get better with time. Caution:** If you're still depressed and crying months later, talk to a parent, a trusted adult, or a school counselor who can help you deal with your emotions and gain perspective.

Tips for Parents

Point out that most couples go through difficult times now and then:

- ❖ *When a relationship is healthy and safe, parents and children benefit when parents stay together. It is worth the work to get through the tough times.*
- ❖ *On the other hand, sometimes a person knows the relationship he or she is in has no future, yet the relationship drags on and on. This is a type of sliding.*
- ❖ *On again, off again relationships are really hard on children. They are also associated with more domestic violence and unplanned pregnancies.*
- ❖ *If you know the relationship has no future, it may be best to make a clear decision about ending it. Children do better with one stable parent than with unstable and/or dangerous parental relationships.*

Pass out *Tips for Parents* (Resource 6f, pg. 129).

The Basics:

- Don't drag it out. Be clear. End it for good.
- Don't keep calling your ex just to make sure he/she is okay.
- Do you need to take precautions? Change locks? Get help leaving safely?
- Tell friends and family. Ask them for support.
- Find something nice (and positive) to do for yourself if you are feeling down.

Realize your breakup can be hard on your child.

- Most children want a relationship with both parents.
- Allow your child to talk about feelings of sadness and loss—even if you hate your ex.
- Permit your ex to stay in touch with your child. Don't interfere with his/her relationship with their child.
- Regular contact is important for your child as long as his/her presence isn't dangerous.
- **Do not badmouth** your ex in front of your child—even if you think he/she deserves it. It just hurts your child and makes your child feel bad.
- Don't think just anyone can substitute for the other parent, not even a stepparent.

Don't hop quickly into a new relationship.

- Focus on being the best parent you can be.
- Complete school; seek employment.
- Learn communication skills to help all your relationships, especially with your ex in co-parenting.*
- Take a break from relationships—give yourself time. Work on building yourself up.
- Next time, don't slide, but decide. Use the relationship smarts you learn in this program!
- It takes time (often a long time) for a relationship to develop between a child and stepparent.
- Extended family and mentors can help support children if you are parenting solo.

***Note:** You will learn some terrific communication skills in this program to help with co-parenting.

Activity: Breakup Songs

(PP) Optional, but fun: Ask volunteers to identify a breakup song. They can bring in one to play in future sessions. Ask them to say which lines in the song are most important.

(PP) Consider playing the song or music video, *Too Good at Goodbyes*, by Sam Smith, and discuss the messages (found on YouTube and linked in PowerPoint slide). Ask if it's good to close oneself up after a disappointment. Ask if taking one's time (like the message of the relationship pyramid and love chemicals activities) might better help someone discover whether a person is worthy of one's love. Might some heartbreaks be avoided by taking things more slowly?

Another contemporary song to consider playing is Lady Gaga's *Million Reasons* (YouTube and hyperlinked in **PP**). Discuss her reasons for breaking up.

Some older songs: Carrie Underwood, *Before He Cheats*; Usher, *Burn*; Fort Minor, *Where'd You Go*; Avril Lavigne, *Don't Tell Me*; Chris Brown, *Say Goodbye*; Linkin Park, *In the End*; Madonna, *Hung Up*; Taylor Swift, *Should Have Said No*; Nickelback, *Should Have Listened*.

Breakup Songs

- Find a break up song. Why the break up?
- How is it being handled? What lines stand out?



Trusted Adult Connection

(PP) Have participants choose one.

1. *Ask your TA to read the breakup handouts (Resources 6d and 6e).* Have them ask their TA to remember back to when they were younger. Which tips would have been helpful to them or a friend back then?
2. *Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships handout (Resource 6c, pg. 126).* Have participants ask their trusted adult to read the three contrasting questions on the handout and determine if the questions make good sense for analyzing healthy or unhealthy relationships. Ask if they have other ideas of how to judge a healthy relationship.

Trusted Adult Connection

Choose one:

- Show your TA the breakup handouts (6d, 6e). Ask them to think back when they were younger. Which tips would have been useful for them back then?
- Ask your TA to read the handout on healthy and unhealthy relationships (6c). Do they feel these 3 questions are good for assessing a relationship? Ask if they have other ideas to add.

Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

<p>IS IT CONDITIONAL?</p> <p>You worry about not being good enough. Your partner makes you feel little. You feel like you have to have a lot of money, or be or look a certain way in order to keep his or her attention or love. You worry a lot about being dumped. You can't be the real you. You have to wear a mask. There is little trust or security.</p>	<p>UNCONDITIONAL?</p> <p>You both feel appreciated for who you really are. You don't have to pretend or play games. You do not have to be perfect. You can tell each other about behaviors in each other that you don't like. You support each other in making changes that you each decide to work on. You each show you genuinely care about the other.</p>
<p>CONTROLLING OR DISRESPECTFUL?</p> <p>One partner needs to be the boss. He or she ridicules the words and actions of the other and shows little interest in his or her feelings. The controlled person worries about upsetting his or her partner and often avoids saying or doing things. The controller does not support his or her partner, and in fact often tries to hold him or her back. One partner thinks he or she is entitled to express his or her anger in any way he or she chooses.</p>	<p>EQUAL, RESPECTFUL, AND SUPPORTIVE?</p> <p>Both partners treat each other well. Neither dominates or consistently gives in. Both partners feel respected. Each partner feels his or her thoughts, feelings, and needs are important to the other. They know differences and disagreements are inevitable in relationships and do not put each other down when these occur. Both partners feel encouraged by the other to develop and better him/herself.</p>
<p>MOSTLY SEXUAL OR MATERIAL?</p> <p>This relationship is based almost exclusively on sex. Or, it is about the material things a person can get out of this relationship. Or, the status one feels by being with him or her. Without this, there would not be much there. There is not a lot of fun or deeper getting-to-know each other.</p>	<p>ATTRACTION ON MANY LEVELS?</p> <p>This couple has chemistry, but they also enjoy talking and getting to know each other. They have fun doing things together. They do things based on shared interests and are open to trying new activities that the other one values. They balance time together, apart, and with friends. This relationship is based on a lot more than looks, status, or material things.</p>

Trusted Adult: Do you think these 3 questions would give someone a good sense if the relationship is healthy? Share any thoughts you have with your teen.

Signature _____

Breaking Up Tips

1. Talk to a trusted and wise person: Discuss the reasons the relationship does not work. If they encourage drama, chasing after him or her in a desperate way, or won't keep your conversation private, they are not wise or a person to trust. Tell friends and family when you're ending it. If you have any concerns for your safety or how the person will react, ask a trusted adult to assist you.

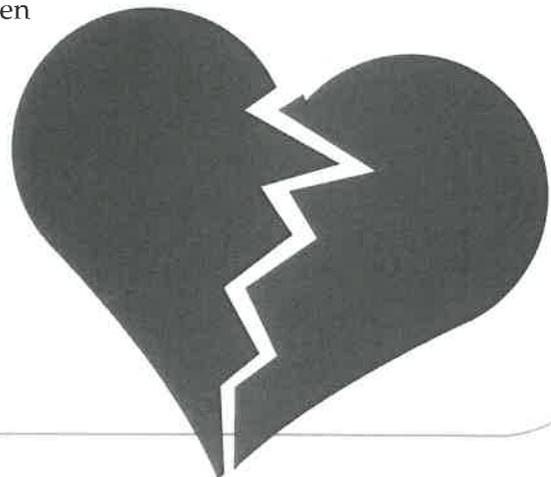
2. Pick a time and place to tell the person yourself: Do not break up in front of his or her friends. The person may become emotional. They may cry, be angry, or want to talk. Give him or her the respect privacy provides. Don't tell the person right before a big event such as their birthday, a game, performance, or the start of the school or workday. A good time is a Saturday or Friday after school or work. This will give you both time to process it and to talk to supportive people. Be sure to tell the person yourself.

Caution: If you think the person may become violent, break up in a safe place. There should be helpful people nearby and present. Seek support and advice from the local domestic violence group to develop a safety plan if you are afraid of your ex.

3. Make a clean break: Don't put it off. Spell it out clearly. Be honest and direct, but not cruel. Say: "I want to break up. This relationship is over." Or, "I do not have the same feelings anymore." Do not string someone along. And remember, you do not have to argue or convince the person. Your feelings are your own.

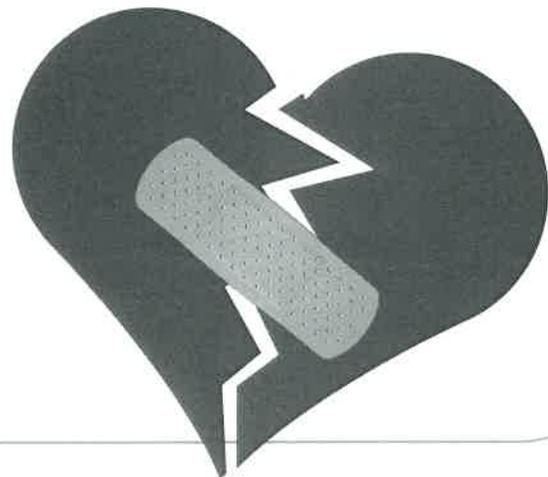
4. Have a method to avoid cruelty: Include in your conversation what you like and appreciate about the other person. But don't give false hope or mixed messages about your decision.

5. Caution: If a person threatens to harm, or even to kill him or herself, if you break up, you must reach out for help. Their threat may make you feel guilty, scared, or angry; but you can and should still end things. Even though this is emotional blackmail to make you feel responsible and not break up, this threat has to be taken seriously. This is why you must reach out to your parents, his or her parents, a school counselor, or another caring adult for help in handling this. The national suicide crisis hotline is 1-800-273-8255. If there is immediate danger, call 911.



Surviving a Breakup

1. **Don't blame yourself.** There are many reasons why relationships end. Make a list of your positive qualities. Ultimately, you want a partner who admires you, recognizes your qualities, is as crazy about you as you are of him or her, and accepts the real you. Make a list of what you want in a partner. What can you learn from this relationship? Are there things you need to work on to build yourself up?
2. **Face reality—it's over.** Don't be obsessed with winning this person back. You can't force a relationship. It sacrifices your dignity to beg for a relationship, to act desperate, or to try to chase after the person.
3. **Stay away from the revenge game.** Forget about getting even or spreading rumors. It's immature and makes you a small person.
4. **Get perspective.** Many people go through a number of romances. This is part of life. With each relationship you can grow wiser and more insightful about yourself, what you are looking for, and how a relationship should be. Talking with a caring, older person who has more life under their belt might give you some valuable perspective.
5. **Don't jump quickly into another relationship.** Some people hop into another relationship right away to make their ex-partner jealous or to make themselves feel better. This only leads to more problems and is not good if you have a child. Give yourself time. Identify what you want to work on and do for yourself.
6. **Get out and do things.** After you've given yourself time to cry, get busy. Don't wallow in self-pity. Shoot baskets or kick a ball, or go walking, biking, or fishing. Take up a hobby. Get outside. Sunshine and the outdoors can be healing. Getting active will make you feel better and put you in a position to meet new people. Call friends and make plans.
7. **Remember, things get better with time.**
Caution: If you're still depressed and crying months later, talk to a parent, a trusted adult, or a school counselor who can help you deal with your emotions and gain perspective.



Tips for Parents

The Basics:

- Don't drag it out. End it for good. Don't do the on again, off again thing.
- Don't keep calling your ex just to make sure he/she is okay.
- Take precautions if you need to. Change locks? Get help leaving safely?
- Tell friends and family. Ask them for support.
- Find something nice (and positive) to do for yourself if you are feeling down.

Realize the breakup can be hard on your child

- Most children want a relationship with both parents.
- Allow your child to talk about feelings of sadness and loss—even if you hate your ex.
- Your child will need to process it many times as they enter different stages of life.
- Make it possible for your ex to stay in touch with your child. Don't interfere with his/her relationship with their child.
- Regular contact is important for your child as long as his/her presence isn't dangerous.
- **Do not badmouth** your ex in front of your child—even if you think he/she deserves it. It just hurts your child and makes them feel bad.
- Don't think just any new partner can substitute for the other parent.

Don't hop quickly into a new relationship

- Focus on being the best parent you can be.
- Complete school; seek employment.
- Learn communication skills to help all your relationships, especially with your ex in co-parenting.
- Take a break from relationships—give yourself time. Work on building yourself up.
- Next time don't slide. Take your time and use the relationship smarts you gain in this program.
- Know it takes time (often a long time) for a relationship to develop between a child and a stepparent.
- Extended family and mentors can help support children if you are parenting solo.



