

# Helping a Friend in an Unhealthy Relationship

## Podcast Transcript

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Teenage dating can be like a roller-coast ride – up one minute and down the next. And, without a lot of experience, you may not know what’s healthy – and what’s not – in a relationship. If you’re worried about a friend who is in a relationship that doesn’t seem quite right, it can be hard to sit on the sidelines and watch.

So how do you know when a friend is in trouble? There are ways to tell if the relationship is going in the wrong direction. If the boyfriend or girlfriend is extremely possessive or jealous, sends frequent texts to check up on your friend, tells your friend what to do or what to wear, or posts insulting or threatening things about your friend online, your friend may need help. You might also have reason to be worried if your friend has unexplained bruises or marks.

If you think a friend’s relationship might not be healthy, there may be things you can do to help. It may be that your friend believes these things are a normal part of the relationship. Sometimes people believe that the abuse is their fault and that they somehow deserve it.

Don’t be afraid to reach out to a friend who you think may be in trouble. First, let your friend know that no one deserves to be mistreated. Even if they aren’t being physically abused, insults and threats – emotional abuse – can still leave scars. And, many times, that emotional abuse can lead to physical violence and real trouble for your friend.

You can encourage your friend to seek help from a trusted adult – maybe a parent or a teacher. Your friend can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233. What your friend may need most is for you to be supportive and listen patiently. Trying to pressure your friend to end the relationship could backfire and you might end up pushing your friend away. Even though his or her boyfriend or girlfriend is abusive, your friend may still have strong feelings for that person.

If you are afraid your friend might be in danger, you can help make a safety plan. That may include finding a way to make sure your friend is not alone with the abuser and has a way home from a party or other place where the abuser might be. You may also want to help your friend come up with a code word to use to ask friends or family for help without alerting the abuser.

It probably won’t help to confront the abuser or post negative things about them online. If anything, it may make the situation worse for your friend.

If your friend has decided to break up, you can be there for support. Remember, breaking up can be difficult. Couples sometimes break up and get back together several times before calling it quits for good. Let your friend know that it may be safer to break up by text or by phone. It may seem harsh, but your friend’s safety should come first. Encourage your friend to stick with the plan and not be drawn into a long argument. In the end, your friend will appreciate your help and support through this difficult time. And that’s what it is all about...being there for our friends when they need us most.

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