



When Relationships Become Unhealthy

Learning Objectives

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

- explain how unhealthy relationships often develop gradually.
- identify behaviours associated with coercive control and domestic abuse.
- describe the law relating to domestic abuse, stalking and non-fatal strangulation.
- explain how to seek help safely for themselves or someone else.

Last lesson...

Last lesson we learnt:

- ✓ Conflict happens in healthy relationships.
- ✓ Healthy couples communicate.
- ✓ Healthy relationships include trust and independence.

Today's lesson focuses on: **When does conflict become control?**

Leah and Aaron - Month 1

Leah (16) has recently started dating Aaron.

Aaron messages every morning.

He walks her home.

He tells her, "I've never met anyone like you."

Her friends think they're a lovely couple.

What is positive in this scenario?



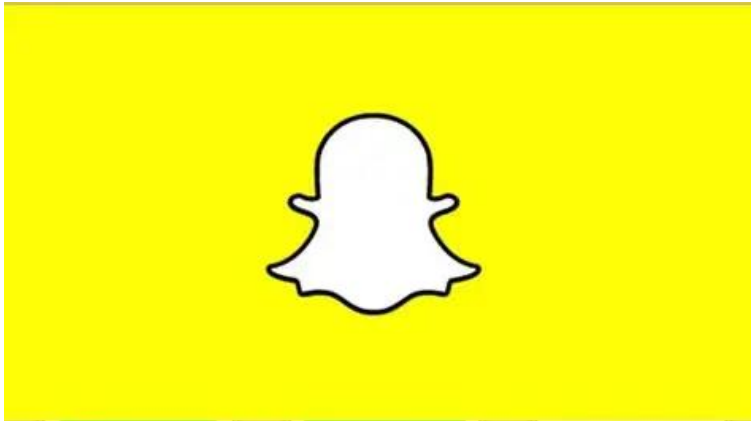
Leah and Aaron - Month 3

Aaron says, "Can I have your Snapchat password?"

"Couples shouldn't have secrets."

"I just worry about you."

**Is this healthy? Possessive?
Controlling? Too early to know?**





Steph



The main reason that most abuse isn't noticed until it becomes aggressive is because, at first, all you see is kindness and affection. It ends up with them controlling your life by making you feel guilty about your own actions and destroying your strong personality through emotional manipulation.

Discussion Task: Is Steph right to think the way she is thinking?
Which behaviours concern you most?
Which behaviour would you challenge first?
Which behaviours might become criminal?



Here are some important **key words** that you are going to need to know. What do they mean?

- **consent**
- **boundaries**
- **harassment**
- **stalking**
- **coercion**
- **controlling behaviours**



Leah and Aaron - Month 6

Aaron now criticises Leah's clothes,
gets angry if she sees friends and says,
"Everyone thinks you're flirting."
He insists she shares her live location.

How has the relationship changed?

Would you describe this as conflict anymore?



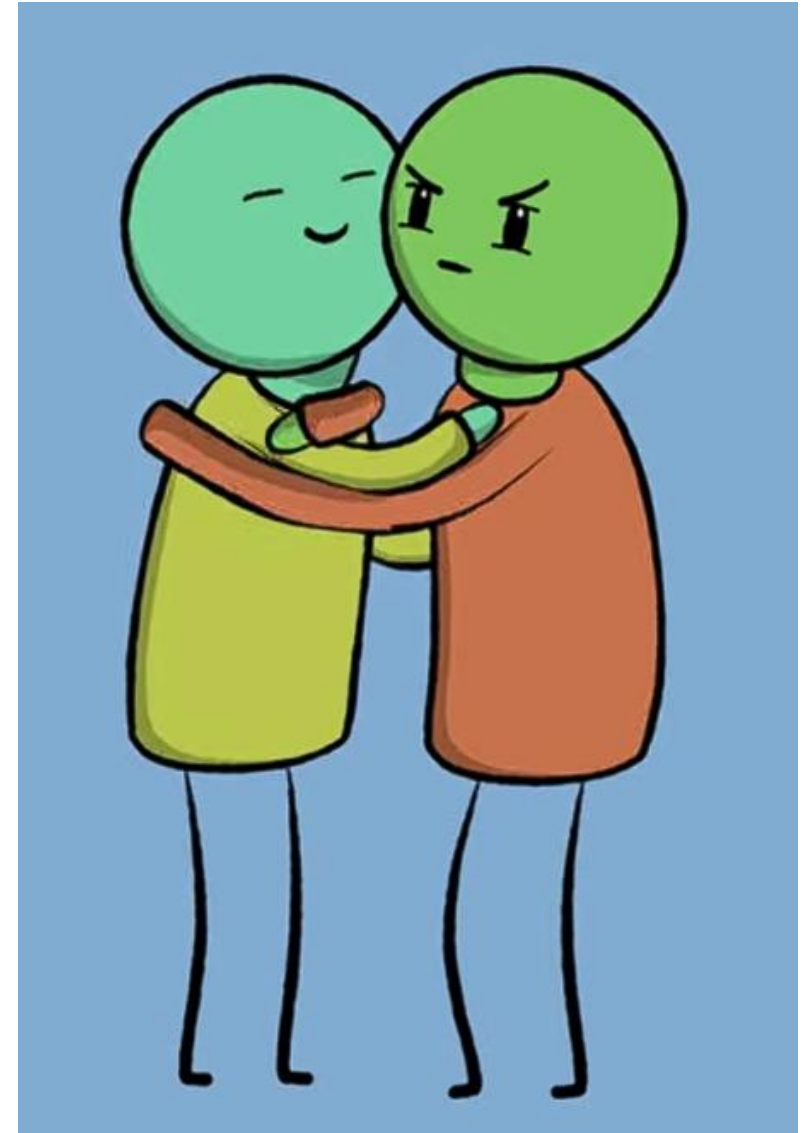
Coercive Control – Where is the line?

It's an animation explaining coercive control rather than dramatising it,

While watching the [three minute video](#), number the warning signs in the order they appear.

- ☐ Jealousy
- ☐ Monitoring
- ☐ Isolation
- ☐ Control
- ☐ Fear
- ☐ Seeking help

Which stage do you think friends are most likely to notice?



Characteristics of a Relationship

HEALTHY CHARACTERISTICS

Consent

Good communication

Trust and freedom

Respect and understanding

Open relaxed body language

UNHEALTHY CHARACTERISTICS

Lack of trust

Bullying and belittling

Imbalance of power between partners

May cost you lots of money and friends

Abuse

Control

Anxiety

Fear

CONCERNING

Desire to please

Gifts and treats

Domestic Abuse in Relationships

Task: Discuss - which behaviours.....remove freedom?...create fear?...are criminal offences?...would require immediate help?

Forced you to have your wages paid into their account.

Banned you from seeing family and friends.

Domestic abuse can occur in same-sex and heterosexual relationships

Told you what you can and can't wear when in public.

Hit you because you burnt a meal you were cooking.

Took control of your social media accounts.

Shouted at you for forgetting to do something.

Told you you were worthless and that nobody could ever really love you.

Why don't people just leave?

- Love
- Hope
- Embarrassment
 - Fear
- Threats
- Children
- Money
- Isolation
- Low confidence
- Fear nobody will believe them



**Is it possible to love
someone who abuses
you? How?**

Non-fatal strangulation and suffocation

Strangulation means applying pressure to someone's neck in a way that can restrict breathing or blood flow.

Suffocation means stopping someone from breathing by covering their mouth, nose or air supply.

These behaviours are **extremely dangerous**. They can cause serious injury, brain injury or death, even if there are no visible marks.

In England and Wales, non-fatal strangulation and suffocation are **criminal offences**.

Any behaviour that involves pressure to the neck, covering someone's mouth or nose, or restricting breathing should be taken seriously and reported.

If this happens, **seek medical help urgently** and speak to a trusted adult, safeguarding lead or the police.

Strangulation is one of the strongest indicators of future serious harm.

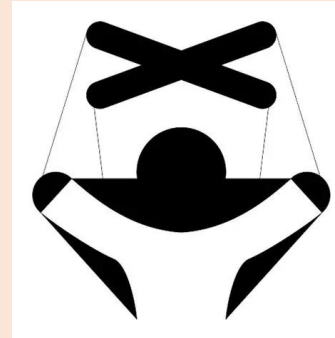


What does the law say about domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is not just physical violence.

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, domestic abuse can include:

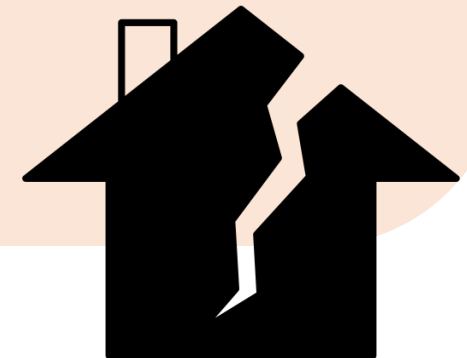
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- emotional abuse;
- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- economic abuse.



Domestic abuse can happen between current or former partners and family members.

Controlling or coercive behaviour is a criminal offence.

**Which examples today were:
Emotional abuse? Economic abuse?
Controlling behaviour? Physical abuse?**



If your friend told you...

Ella tells you, "Please don't tell anyone. It'll just make things worse."

**What could you say? Should you tell someone else?
What would be the tipping point?**

"I'm really glad you told me."

"This isn't your fault."

"I'm worried about your safety."

"We don't have to deal with this alone."

Case Study

Amira and Lewis have been together for six months.

At first Lewis texted Amira every morning and wanted to spend lots of time together.

Recently he has started asking where she is whenever she goes out. He becomes upset if she doesn't reply immediately and says that if she really loved him she would always let him know where she is.

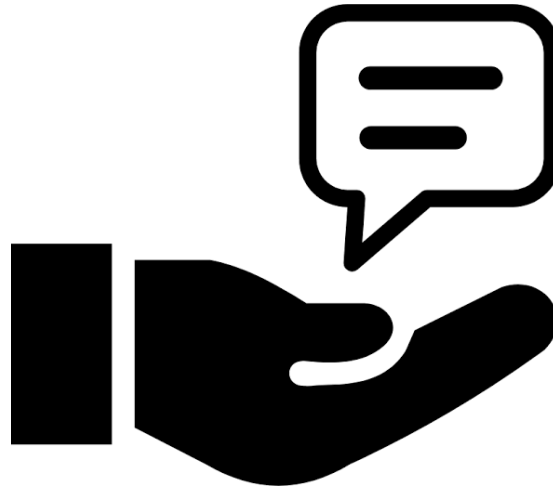
He doesn't like one of her closest friends and often says that her friend is "a bad influence". Amira now sees that friend much less often because it is easier than arguing.

Lewis has never physically hurt Amira.

- 1. Which behaviours are healthy?**
- 2. Which behaviours are concerning?**
- 3. Which behaviours could be examples of coercive control?**
- 4. What advice would you give Amira?**
- 5. Who could she speak to if she wanted support?**

Dear Advice Team...

"My boyfriend says couples should always share passwords if they trust each other. He gets upset if I don't reply straight away. He's never shouted at me or hit me so I think I'm probably overreacting."



Write a reply.
Include

- reassurance
- explanation
- warning signs
- where to seek help

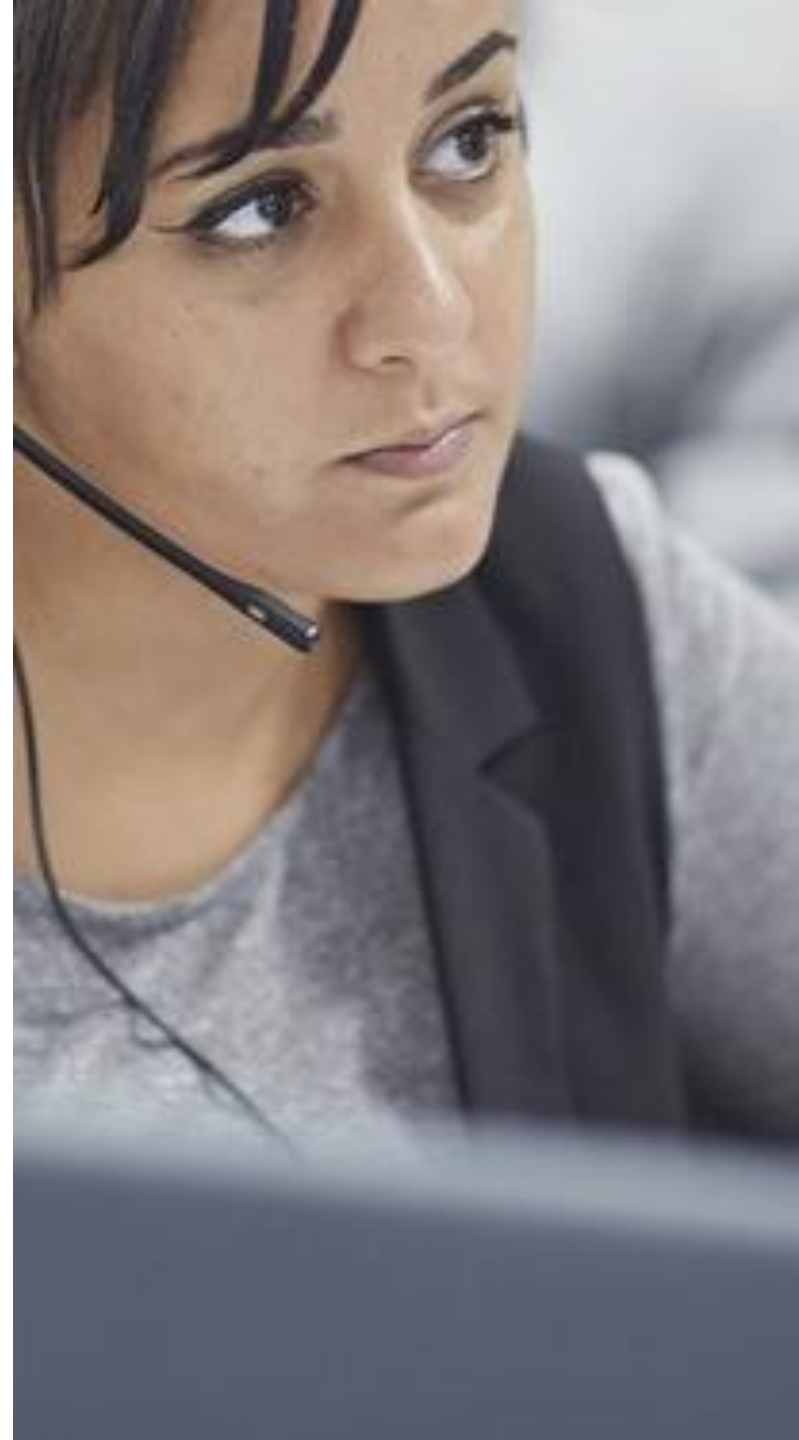
Sources of support

- At school - tutors, school nurse, counsellor
- Police - 999 or 101
- National Stalking Helpline - 0808 802 0300 email support & online tools www.stalkinghelpline.org
- 24-hour National Domestic Violence Freephone Helpline - 0808 2000 247
- Respect - support those exhibiting controlling behaviours 0808 802 4040
- Men's Advice Line - supports men with controlling partners 0808 801 0327
- The Mix - search crime and safety

Who would you contact first in each situation?

Which organisation would be most appropriate

1. if someone is frightened?
2. someone is unsure?
3. someone is experiencing stalking?
4. someone only wants advice?



Exit Ticket

One Sentence of Advice

Finish these sentences –

1. "A healthy relationship should never make you feel..."
2. "If I was worried about someone's relationship I would..."

Teacher's slide – FAQs

Students may have additional questions after completing this lesson. This page is intended to give you answers to questions that aren't covered in the main lesson.

Isn't a relationship just having a boyfriend or girlfriend? A relationship is just another word for a connection we have with others. For example, we can have a relationship with friends, family members, work colleagues, or a romantic partner. The characteristics of positive and negative relationships are relevant to lots of types of relationships.

How do I avoid conflict in my relationships? You can't avoid conflict. It's part of any relationship. How well you manage that conflict determines how successful your relationships are. It is possible to disagree with someone in a respectful way.

Isn't it better to stay in a relationship rather than end it? Whether you want to be in a relationship is always your choice and any relationship that makes you unhappy is worth leaving.

Why is it bad to block out your feelings after a breakup? I don't want to wallow in sadness, I want to just get on with my life! Trying to ignore or block out feelings like anger, sadness, grief or frustration can lead to physical stress on your body. In order to "get over" a relationship in a healthy way, you need to allow yourself to feel your feelings for a while. It sounds counter-intuitive, but allowing yourself to feel your feelings allows you to let go of them more easily. If you try to suppress or ignore them, it's harder to let them go. Acknowledging your feelings is not the same as "wallowing" – allowing yourself some time to process what has happened before you move on is the healthiest strategy.

How common is domestic abuse? Why doesn't everyone report instances of domestic abuse? Globally, 1 in 3 women experience domestic violence. The rates of domestic abuse might be even higher than this, because it can be difficult for people to reach out for support and report cases of domestic abuse. The organisations listed at the end of this lesson can offer advice and guidance about reporting domestic abuse.

How long do feelings of grief last after a break-up? There is no set duration for any type of grief. We all grieve in different ways and for different amounts of time. Remember to look after your physical and mental health by doing exercise, eating healthily, and getting a good amount of sleep. Try talking about your feelings with friends, family members, or a school teacher or counsellor. Don't set yourself an unachievable target of feeling 'back to normal' straight away. Instead, try to set small targets that are achievable, like spending 30-60 minutes a day doing a hobby you enjoy.

What happens if I break up with someone then later decide I want to get back with them? When grieving a relationship, missing your partner or questioning the break-up can be very common. An American study found that 10-17% of married couples separated and then got back together again. What is most important is to prioritise your own wellbeing as the grieving process might be more difficult to cope with for a second time.