

Breaking Up Is Hard to Do

BEHAVIORS

compassion, communication, honesty, respect, responsibility

PILLAR
Caring

MATERIALS
flipchart, copies of handout (1 per youth)

OBJECTIVE

Youth will learn about compassionate ways to end a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

ILS: 4A, 4B,
24A
SEL: 2A, 2C

PROMISING PRACTICE

3.2 Foster positive peer relationships.



Procedure

1. Make photocopies of the handout (1 per youth). On the first sheet of the flipchart, write "Bad Ways to Break Up" at the top. On the second sheet, write the four breakup tips listed on the handout.
2. Ask the group to brainstorm examples of really hurtful ways to break up with a girlfriend or boyfriend. Write their answers on the flipchart sheet. Add the following ideas if teens do not mention them.
 - Get a friend to break the news.
 - Wait until you have a fight, then blame the breakup on that.
 - Do mean things to get the other person to initiate a breakup.
 - Start ignoring the person and hope that will communicate your message.
 - Start dating the person's best friend.
 - Break up by sending a text message.
3. "I'm going to read two statements. Are these good things to say if you have decided to break up with someone?" Then read the two breakup statements.
 - I'd still like to see you and hang out as friends. I just don't want to go steady anymore.
 - I really like you, but I need some time to think about our relationship.
4. Ask what the teens see as good or not-so-good about these breakup statements. If no one makes this point during the discussion, ask if the statements amount to beating around the bush or putting off the inevitable.
5. Make these additional points to conclude this part of the discussion:
 - The two "breakup statements" are often used as cover-ups for the truth that "I'm just not that into you" or "I don't think this is working out." They may seem kind, but instead they may give someone false hope. They lack honesty and integrity and can heighten the other person's embarrassment or pain.
 - If one person still desires a romantic relationship, "just being friends" can be torture. Once you decide you want to break up, then you need to do it.
 - Sharing the truth is difficult, but don't put it off or be indirect. Don't string the other person along. But remember, being honest and forthright shouldn't involve being mean.
6. Distribute the handouts while saying that you have some breakup tips to talk about with the group. Talk through each tip and the related advice.



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EXTENSION

(continued on next page)

Breaking Up Is Hard to Do (cont'd)

7. Ask:

- Why is it important to break up in a caring way?
- If someone were telling you he or she needs to break up, which of the ways we discussed would you prefer be used? Why?
- What can you do to prepare for breaking up in one of the caring ways we discussed?

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HANDOUT: CLEAR BUT KIND—TIPS FOR BREAKING UP



1. **Talk to a trusted friend or adult.**

Go over the reasons the relationship is not working. Choose someone you trust to keep your conversation private—you want your boyfriend or girlfriend to hear it from you, not from someone else.

2. **Pick an appropriate time and place.**

Pick a place with some privacy for your conversation. You don't want to have it around the other person's friends. He or she is likely to become emotional—perhaps cry or be angry—or may want to talk. Give the respect that privacy provides. Don't have the conversation right before a big event (an exam, something he or she is performing in, a birthday party) or when she or he is just about to go out of town. A good time is a Friday evening or a Saturday—you will both have time to start getting over the breakup and talk to supportive friends and adults over the weekend. And again, be sure to tell the person yourself. (Note: If you think he or she could become violent, choose a place to break up that is away from friends but where people are nearby in case of an angry reaction.)

3. **Make a clean break.**

Spell your decision out clearly. Don't draw things out or make empty promises. Be honest and direct, but not mean. Don't send a mixed message. Say "I want to break up. I have decided to end our relationship" or "I do not have the same feelings anymore. I do not love/like you like a boyfriend/girlfriend."

4. **Avoid cruelty.**

Include in your conversation what you like and appreciate about the other person. Point out her or his strengths or what you appreciated about the relationship. But be careful at the same time not to give false hopes or send mixed messages about your decision.

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