

## Resource 1: Attitudes snapshots

1. If a person keeps surprising their partner by turning up unexpectedly, like at work or at a friend's house, it's a good sign that they really like them.



2. If someone buys their partner a gift for every one-month anniversary, they are going too far. That's just weird!

3. If someone criticises their partner's friends and family all the time, trying to suggest they shouldn't see them, I think it's a really unhealthy sign.



4. I care about the way I look and I expect my partner to do the same. If they don't look good in what they are wearing, I'll say so and suggest something better. I just want us both to look our best.



5. If a person is constantly checking up on you, asking where you are and who you are with in a way that makes it feel like you are being interrogated, they clearly have some issues and you should walk.



6. It's okay in relationships to get things wrong sometimes – like saying things that don't come out right or falling out over what movie to watch. It means sometimes people break up over misunderstandings but then they can talk it through and get back together. It's no big deal. The key thing is if a person doesn't listen if you say you need space – then that's not okay and they need to back off.

7. I've had a partner go really over the top with gifts of jewellery and gig tickets to try and get me to get serious with them. It made me feel really uncomfortable. And when I tried to give the gifts back, they started insulting me and saying I thought I was too good for them.



## Resource 2: Make up or break up scenarios

Shelly and Tiegan had been going out for a few months when Shelly noticed that Tiegan was acting in odd ways that made her feel uncomfortable. Tiegan started turning up at places she knew Shelly would be then claimed it was just a coincidence. Recently Tiegan's been buying Shelly clothes that she expects Shelly to wear and gets upset if she doesn't, saying it shows she doesn't like her gifts.

## Resource 2: Make up or break up scenarios

Earlier in their relationship, Rajesh was labelled by his partner, Shari, as 'useless with money' as he often ran out of cash before pay day. Since then Shari has controlled their joint finances which makes it very difficult for Rajesh to live the life he wants to lead.

## Resource 2: Make up or break up scenarios

Leila has always wanted to go to university to study law. But her partner didn't want to move so asked her to try something different so they could stay together. As the relationship seemed really loving, Leila deferred her UCAS application for a year. Recently her partner has been downplaying her grades and accomplishments so Leila isn't sure she should apply – perhaps she isn't good enough to study at university.

## Resource 2: Make up or break up scenarios

Devon really loves her partner but sometimes feels upset when they don't want the same things. It's really frustrating that they can't seem to agree on where they should go on holiday. They are arguing a lot over it and it makes Devon feel insecure and unloved.

## Resource 2: Make up or break up scenarios

Locke and Gianna had been a couple for a long time. When Gianna said she wasn't happy with some things in the relationship and was thinking it was time to end things, Locke tried to get her to change her mind. When this didn't seem to work, Locke said he felt really emotionally unstable so he didn't know what he'd do if she left him. So Gianna had agreed to stay together whilst Locke got some help but secretly felt uncomfortable about this as she really wasn't interested in seeing Locke any more.

## Teacher Notes

### Resource 1: Attitude snapshots

Key points to consider when feeding back include:

1. *There are circumstances where as a one off, some people might really like such a surprise. But if it happens a few times, and particularly if a person feels they've shown they weren't happy with it or it was awkward, or if there was a clear suggestion that they were not really invited to something yet they turn up anyway, then this is an unhealthy relationship behaviour and may suggest the person has a controlling pattern of behaviour.*
2. *Different people have different expectations around anniversaries and gift-giving. This behaviour is not necessarily unhealthy but it is worth thinking about their motivations. Is it because they genuinely enjoy giving their partner a token of their feelings and their partner feels happy about this or does it feel like they are trying to buy affection? Some people use gift-giving as a way of making a person feel like they owe something in return.*
3. *It is common for a partner to get on better with some friends or family than others. But isolating a partner from friends and family is a key signal that a person has controlling patterns of behaviour. This can become quite a dangerous situation so this signal should not be ignored.*
4. *Telling someone what to wear is a controlling behaviour and is not acceptable. It is common for someone to like it when their partner looks their best but comments which undermine a person's self-esteem or make them feel they have done something wrong for wearing what they like is unacceptable behaviour.*
5. *It is common for people to show an interest in their partner's day but this more extreme behaviour is a sign of insecurity or unhealthy control patterns and must be taken seriously.*
6. *It is always best to try to resolve disputes before a relationship breakup as this helps to build security in a partnership. However, particularly in teenage relationships, this pattern does occur and as long as both people want to continue to talk, this is fine. But once someone is clear they want the relationship to end, or that they are not interested in talking at that point, this must be respected.*
7. *Buying affection and pressuring someone to move faster than they want in a relationship is a sign of an unhealthy, coercive relationship. The fact that this person's partner was abusive when they tried to resolve the situation is confirmation that this is an unhealthy partnership and they should seek help to protect their safety.*

### Resource 2: Breakup scenarios

- *Tiegan's behaviours are concerning. In isolation, such incidents may seem like things that a couple can talk through. But Shelly is obviously feeling uncomfortable – this is a sign that something is not right and she should listen to these feelings. Shelly may feel torn about ending the relationship but it is best to split up before the level of emotional investment increases for both of them.*
- *This scenario is unclear. If Rajesh was initially happy to let Shari have control of their joint finances, she may be unaware that her behaviour is upsetting Rajesh. If so, honest communication between them may help. Ensuring Rajesh has more financial independence is likely to be important moving forwards. However, if Rajesh was 'bullied into' this situation, has*

*made his current feelings clear and these have been ignored, and/or if Shari's comments about his financial management are part of a pattern of knocking his self-esteem, then this is an unhealthy relationship situation and Rajesh should seek help. He may be able to talk with friends and relatives to find practical solutions to not having the money to separate from his partner. He should contact some of the support services who can help him with an exit plan.*

- *Leila's partner appears to be using subtly negative comments as a way of knocking her self-esteem so that she does what they want - an unhealthy pattern of behaviour. If her partner is unaware of this behaviour, asking them to stop could change this. However, it is important for Leila to ask herself whether she wants to be with someone who (a) does not encourage her to follow what is important for her and (b) uses negative comments as a way of getting what they want. It is also common in people who exhibit controlling patterns for their behaviour to start out as being only slightly outside the range of acceptable behaviours then the situation gradually escalates. It's therefore important Leila thinks carefully about whether she feels happy and safe. She should talk to friends, family and support services to get their help.*
- *There are currently no signs of coercive behaviour in the description of Devon's situation. Many couples argue about things but with practice and good communication, they can become better able to act in ways which accommodate both partners' needs. E.g. they may be able to find a compromise for their holiday plans. However, it's important to look for common values and hopes for the future as a relationship is more likely to be long-lasting in such situations. If this is something which concerns Devon, they should discuss this with their partner and decide whether they are a good fit as a couple. Organisations such as Relate can help people to negotiate relationship issues. Their mediation service is particularly suited to longer term couples.*
- *Locke's comments suggest he would be suicidal if she left. Often people do feel strong emotions about breakups but it is not appropriate to emotionally blackmail people into staying in a relationship. Locke's threat should be taken seriously by Gianna but this should not stop her doing what she feels is right. As difficult as this situation is, Gianna is not responsible for Locke's actions so the best approach is for her to be supportive by suggesting Locke seeks help from friends, family and/or professionals but to stick to her boundaries. Giving in to such threats is likely to lead to anger and resentment which is not helpful for either person. Such emotional instability can be a sign that the breakup could be more difficult so it would be helpful for Gianna to seek support to manage the situation during the transition period.*

### **Plenary advice**

*Ensure young people are aware that relationship abuse is illegal and that the police can be contacted in cases of domestic abuse.*

*If someone sees a friend being controlling:*

- *Friends can pull them aside and say that their behaviour is unhealthy.*
- *They can suggest they get support with managing their behaviour e.g. counsellor, support services.*
- *They can support their friend's partner by warning them if they think they are at risk.*
- *They can report their friend's behaviour to the police if they feel their friend's partner is at risk.*

*If someone is worried their friend is in a controlling relationship:*

- *Help their friend to identify the unhealthy behaviours and help them recognise they are not 'normal' things they need to put up with.*
- *Suggest they seek support from specialist services and/or the police.*
- *Ring the police directly if they consider a friend in immediate danger.*
- *Provide a place to go if they need to exit a situation quickly.*
- *Practical support can help too - things like keeping a basic spare mobile phone and overnight bag at a friend's house can help a person to exit a relationship if they are living with an abusive partner.*

*HOWEVER, it is important to stress that some people who exhibit controlling behaviours can directly target those they see as intervening. It is very important that someone protects their own safety too whilst looking to support friends.*