Love Notes 3.0
Relationship Skills for Love, Life, and Work
By Marline E. Pearson, M.A.

Updated edition just released!

Love Notes Version 3.0 is a completely revised version of Loves Notes 2.1, an adaptation of the evidence-based Relationship Smarts PLUS 3.0. Unplanned pregnancy, single parenting, and troubled relationships are a serious threat to the well-being and futures of many young adults, as well as to their children. Love Notes 3.0 was created for this vulnerable, high-risk audience. In 13 lessons, participants discover, often for the first time, how to make wise choices about partners, sex, relationships, pregnancy, and more.

The Research Base for Love Notes v3.0

Love Notes has been evaluated at the University of Louisville and found to be 46% more effective as an innovative pregnancy prevention strategy for at-risk youth. Federally funded, the study tested Love Notes’ innovative approach against traditional health/body based methods. Read more.

Love Notes v3.0 is an adaptation of the evidence based Relationship Smarts PLUS 3.0 program recognized as an evidence-based program for its impacts on violence and aggression in the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs Practices by SAMSHA.

To order or for more information:
www.DibbleInstitute.org
PO Box 7881 • Berkeley, CA 94707-0881
800.695.7975 • relationshipskills@dibbleinstitute.org
Table of Contents

Introduction to Love Notes ...........................................v
Instructor Tips ..........................................................xii
Love Notes Video and Resource Guide ..........................xv

LESSON 1: Relationships Today .....................................1
• Relationships Today
• Defining a Vision
• Choosing Reds or Greens?
• Film Opportunity

LESSON 2: Knowing Yourself ........................................25
• Good Relationships Start with You
• Understanding My Personality Style
• Examining Family Origin

LESSON 3: My Expectations—My Future ..........................47
• What’s Important?
• The Power of Expectations
• Myself—My Future

LESSON 4: Attractions and Starting Relationships ................63
• Relationship Pyramid
• The Chemistry of Attraction

LESSON 5: Principles of Smart Relationships ....................85
• Smart or Not-So-Smart?
• Seven Principles of Smart Relationships
• Seven Questions to Ask
• Three Sides of Love

LESSON 6: Is It a Healthy Relationship? .........................107
• How Can You Tell?
• Having Fun—It’s Important!
• Breaking Up

LESSON 7: Dangerous Love ........................................131
• Early Warnings and Red Flags
• Violence: Why it Happens, What Helps, Signs of Greatest Danger
• Dangerous Love: Impact on Children
• Draw the Line of Respect
• Sexual Assault

LESSON 8: Decide, Don’t Slide! The Low-Risk Approach to Relationships ........................................163
• The High Costs of Sliding
• The Low-Risk Deciding Approach
• Making Decisions
• The Success Sequence

LESSON 9: What’s Communication Got to Do With It? ..........189
• What’s Communication Got to Do with It?
• Angry Brains and the Power of Time Outs
• The Speaker Listener Technique—When Talking is Difficult

LESSON 10: Communication Challenges and More Skills ..........217
• Communication Patterns Learned in Family
• Complain and Raise Issues Effectively
• Hidden Issues: What Pushes Your Button?
• A Problem-Solving Model
• A Brief Review

LESSON 11: Let’s Talk About Sex ....................................239
• Let’s Talk About Sex… and Sliding
• The Six Parts of Intimacy
• Emotional Risks and Emotional Benefits
• Are We on the Same Page?
• Am I Ready?
• Drawing Intimacy Lines and Pacing Relationships

Lesson 12: Let’s Plan for Choices ....................................275
• Test Your Sex Smarts
• STDs and HIV Are for Real
• Risky Situations
• Pressure Situations—Assertiveness Skills
• My Personal Plan

LESSON 13: Through the Eyes of a Child ..........................317
• Child Looking for a Family
• What about Fathers?
• Father Absence, Relationship Troubles
• Child Speak: Brighter Futures
• Decisions about Living Together
• Planning for Success—Wrap-Up

Appendix ........................................................................367
• Teens, Technology and Social Media
  Supplemental Appendix Lesson
• In-depth Film Guide for Antwone Fisher
• About the Author
• Acknowledgements
• Colored Activity Cards

Sample Lesson from Love Notes 3.0
www.DibbleInstitute.org
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.

• 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:
6c. Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships handout (Duplicate, one per person.)
6d. Breaking Up Tips handout
6e. Surviving a Breakup handout
6f. Tips for Parents handout (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.


✓ Gather sculpting materials. (Materials are reusable)


✓ Review the workbook application Is It a Healthy Relationship? (pgs. 19–20).

✓ Duplicate Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships (Resource 6c), Breaking Up Tips (Resource 6d), Surviving a Breakup (Resource 6e), and Tips for Parents (Resource 6f). 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.

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)
**Lesson 6**

**How Does It Feel?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhealthy</th>
<th>Healthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conditional?</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Controlling? Disrespectful?</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mostly sexual/material?</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Unhealthy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhealthy</th>
<th>Healthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conditional?</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Controlling? Disrespectful?</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mostly sexual/material?</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Healthy

**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?
• 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.
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 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.

**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.

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.
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.
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

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?
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.

*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.

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) or use the PowerPoint slide and briefly review: (PP)

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). (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.

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).
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.
(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.


**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). 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRACTION ON MANY LEVELS?</th>
<th>MOSTLY SEXUAL OR MATERIAL?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Attraction on Many Levels?
  - develop and better him/herself
  - These occur: both partners feel encouraged by the other to
    - support each other in making changes that you each need
    - to feel appreciated for who you really are. You don’t have
  - Equal, Respectful, and Supportive

- Mostlly Sexual or Material?
  - to express his or her anger in any way he or she chooses.
  - control does or support his or her partner, and in each other feels
    - the other. They know differences and disagreements are normal.
    - needs and support each other.
    - This relationship is based almost exclusively on sex. Or it is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships
  - The real deal: You have to wear a mask. There is little trust.
  - Is it conditional? You worry about not being good enough.
  - Unconditional? Your partner makes
  - You worry about not being good enough. Your partner makes
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.
Anyone can have doubts about his or her relationship. Is it worth it? Should I stay? The answers to these questions below can help you know. They may help you decide if you should end it or identify what needs to change to continue. If you are not in a relationship, use them to understand the problems of a past relationship or to analyze a close friend’s relationship. This exercise will help you know what to pay attention to when you start a new relationship.

Place an “X” on the line to indicate where the relationship is/was.

Does it feel conditional?
• I worry about not being good enough. I don’t feel free to be the real me.
• I feel I need to act, talk, or look a certain way or have money to get his or her love.
• I’m afraid that my partner might leave if I don’t do everything he or she wants me to do.

Or, unconditional?
• My partner admires and appreciates the real me. I don’t have to pretend to be perfect.
• I can rely on my partner to be faithful.
• My partner shows that he or she really wants to be with me.
Safety Note: If you put an "X" on the controlling end or are afraid in your relationship, talk to someone you trust. Check out LoveIsRespect.org website. Text "loveis" to 22522. In Spanish also.

Does it feel controlling?
- He or she puts me down and shows little interest in my opinions or feelings.
- My partner makes me feel stupid. I walk on eggshells.
- My partner seems super jealous or checks up on me 24/7. Fights get scary.

Or, equal and supportive?
- I can share my feelings and opinions and my partner seems to care about them.
- My partner supports me in my goals. We encourage each other to be better people.
- We’re friends. I feel respected by my partner.

Does it feel like it is mostly about sex or material things?
- My hunch is that without the sex, there would not be much interest.
- I know deep down inside that I am in this relationship because of the money or material things my partner gives me.
- Because I am with him or her, I look more attractive to other people, and that’s part of why I’m in it.

Or, like the attractions and interests are on many levels?
- I know it is more than my looks, body, or money that my partner likes about me.
- We talk about lots of stuff and have similar interests and values. We genuinely like each other’s personality and have fun together.
- We both want to do nice things for each other. It does not feel like one person is doing all the giving or all the work.

Describe 3 behaviors you would like to see in a relationship that would help make it happy, healthy, and safe. (For example: Listen to me, show you care about what I say, be faithful to me)

1. 
2. 
3. 