

THE HITS KEEP COMING

POP MUSIC AND VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS

Abuse
 Abuse
 Aggressive
 Control
 Perpetrator
 Popular culture
 Power
 Social Norms
 Victim
 Violence
 Domestic Violence Act

- ✓ 1. To help learners recognise the role that **popular culture** plays in our ideas about relationships.
- ✓ 2. For learners to identify messages in lyrics as relating to healthy (equal) or unhealthy (unequal/controlling) relationships.
- ✓ 3. For learners to consider how their own attitudes about ideal relationships and dating behaviour are influenced by pop music.

45 minutes

Worksheet: 'The Hits Keep Coming' (provided)

Teacher Answer Key
Teen Power and Control Wheel
Teen Equality Wheel

PROCEDURE

- 1 Introduce the exercise by telling learners that they are going to analyse lyrics from popular songs in order to identify what these songs tell us about relationships.
- 2 Provide each learner with a copy of the Worksheet: 'The Hits Keep Coming' and copies of both the 'Teen Equality Wheel' and 'Teen Power and Control Wheel'. You could also put an enlarged copy of each wheel on the board where all learners can see them.
- 3 Explain that learners should read the lyrics carefully and then fill out the which segment of either wheel (Teen Power or Teen Equality) that best describes the lyric (column 2), and the reason that it fits this segment (column 3).
- 4 After everyone has filled out their worksheets (this should take 15-20 mins), ask learners to volunteer their answers, including which segment of which wheel it matched, and why.
- 5 Go through the lyrics one by one and facilitate a class discussion by asking:
 - a. Do you agree with the other learner's answer? Why?
 - b. Do you know who sings the song and what the song title is?
 - c. Is it a popular song?
 - d. Given that the lyrics are taken from songs that we hear everyday, why don't we notice how many messages promote unhealthy relationships?

You should cover the following:

- Popular culture idealises volatile/unstable and aggressive or violent relationships as romantic and passionate.
- We start to see this as normal or as an ideal and think that relationships that are not volatile are boring.
- This imagery matches social norms around aggressive or violent masculinity and submissive femininity so we see it as normal.
- We have become desensitised to violence against women because it has been part of popular culture for so long that we do not notice it.
- The upbeat and catchy melodies of pop music draw attention away from the meaning of the lyrics.

- e. What do you think are the effects when men and women get these messages from so many different sources all the time?

You should include the following:

- They think this is normal, and the way relationships should be
- They cannot tell if they are in unhealthy relationships because they have no healthy role models.
- Women expect to be treated poorly
- Men expect that they should be dominant or aggressive
- Relationships are less fulfilling because partners are not taught or modelled communication, respect and trust.

- f. How can we challenge these messages and promote healthy relationships?

Here you or the learners may:

- Provide counter-narratives to the unhealthy relationships in media
- Find and talk about healthy role models and relationships
- Encourage communication and trust in relationships
- Tell your partner what you want and ask them what they want
- Negotiate compromises or solutions to problems together
- Ask for consent
- Tell your partner if you do not like something they do
- Avoid discussing problems when you are angry or upset, wait till you are both calmer
- Seek help if you think you are in an unhealthy relationship
- Break up respectfully but firmly (See Ch4, Ex8: Breaking Up is Hard to Do)

TEACHER TIPS



General

Although this exercise doesn't ask about personal experiences and so should not carry a risk of triggering adverse reactions from learners who may have been, or are, the victim of an abusive relationship, any discussion of these topics requires sensitivity on the part of the teacher. In every class and school there are likely to be perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. It is important for teachers to be mindful of this fact and to make sure that the discussion doesn't single out individuals or vilify people. It is much more helpful to focus on the perpetrators' behaviours, by saying things like "it is wrong when someone verbally abuses someone else" rather than saying 'your boyfriend is wrong to abuse you'.

Different people in the class may have different opinions on what constitutes dating and domestic violence versus what is acceptable behaviour. Do not entertain long debates on this topic, but rather refer to the definitions provided by the Domestic Violence Act.

Do not try and take on the role of counsellor during the class. If a learner discloses that they are in an abusive relationship, acknowledge their disclosure (by saying something like 'It was very brave of you to tell us

that') and ask them to come to you after class so that you can provide them with more assistance. Be prepared with the telephone numbers and information of NGOs or other counselling services that they could contact for assistance.



Making the Link with Gender and Violence

This exercise helps to recognise how popular culture sends us continuous messages about relationships. Often these messages teach us that the ideal is to aim for unhealthy relationships based on inequality, power differences, and control, where men are always the ones in charge. It also characterises exciting, passionate, and romantic relationships as unstable, violent, or aggressive.

This exercise explores and helps learners reflect on these messages, how they have internalised them, and where their own lives reflect the messages of these songs. It helps move learners from idealising unhealthy relationships to reflecting on more realistic healthy standards for themselves and others. It also helps learners who are in abusive relationships to identify this, and to take appropriate steps and seek assistance.



Assessment Ideas

The worksheet can be graded based on how well the learners can identify and analyse messages in song lyrics about relationships.



THE HITS KEEP COMING

Copy this worksheet for each learner

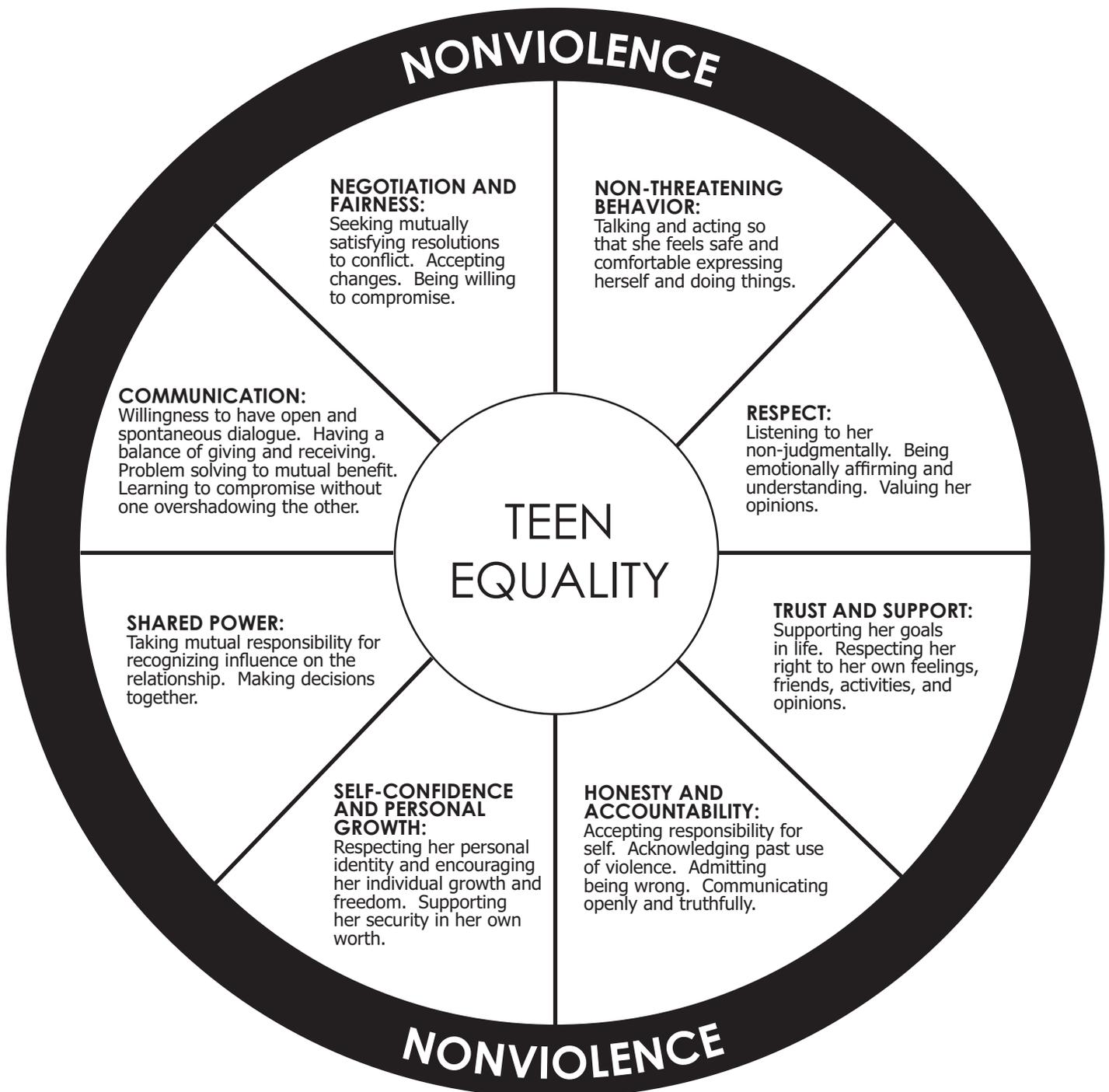
LYRICS	WHEEL/ SEGMENT	REASON
<p>Now there's gravel in our voices Glass is shattered from the fight In this tug of war you'll always win Even when I'm right 'Cause you feed me fables from your hand With violent words and empty threats 'Love The Way You Lie Part II' Rihanna, featuring Eminem</p>		
<p>I slipped my hand under her skirt I said don't worry, it's not gonna hurt Oh, my reputation's kinda clouded with dirt That's why you sleep with one eye open But that's the price you pay 'Girl with One Eye' Florence & the Machine</p>		
<p>I bust the windows out your car And no it didn't mend my broken heart I'll probably always have these ugly scars But right now I don't care about that part I bust the windows out your car After I saw you laying next to her I didn't wanna but I took my turn I'm glad I did it cuz you had to learn 'Bust your Windows' Jazmine Sullivan</p>		
<p>Have you ever felt you ever want to kill her? And you mix them emotions with tequila And you mix that with a little bad advice On one of those bad nights, ya'll have a bad fight And you talking 'bout her family, her aunts and shit And she say "Motherfucker, yo momma's a bitch!" You know, domestic drama and shit, all that attitude I'll never hit a girl, but I'll shake the shit outta you! 'Bittersweet Poetry' Kanye West featuring John Mayer</p>		
<p>When he calls to me, I am ready I'll wash his feet with my hair if he needs Forgive him when his tongue lies through his brain Even after three times, he betrays me 'Judas' Lady GaGa</p>		
<p>You, with your words like knives And swords and weapons that you use against me You have knocked me off my feet again Got me feeling like I'm nothing 'Mean' Taylor Swift</p>		
<p>This house is too huge, if you move out I'll burn all two thousand Square feet of it to the ground, ain't shit you can do about it 'Cause with you I'm in my fuckin' mind, without you I'm out it 'Love The Way You Lie Part II' Rihanna</p>		

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LYRICS	WHEEL/ SEGMENT	REASON
<p>You think I'm pretty Without any makeup on You think I'm funny When I tell the punchline wrong I know you get me So I let my walls come down, down 'Teenage Dream' Katy Perry</p>		
<p>When I kiss you so good, Why would you wanna break up? When this loving is so good, Why would you wanna break up? When I hit that so good, Why would you wanna break up? When this feeling is so good, Why would you wanna break up? 'Break up' Mario featuring Gucci Mane and Sean Garrett</p>		
<p>Ooh there's somethin about kinda woman that can do for herself I look at her and it makes me proud There's something about her Somethin oh so sexy about kinda woman that don't even need my help She said she got it she got it No doubt, it's somethin about her Cause she work like a boss play like a boss 'Miss Independent' Ne-yo</p>		

TEEN EQUALITY

Copy this wheel for each learner



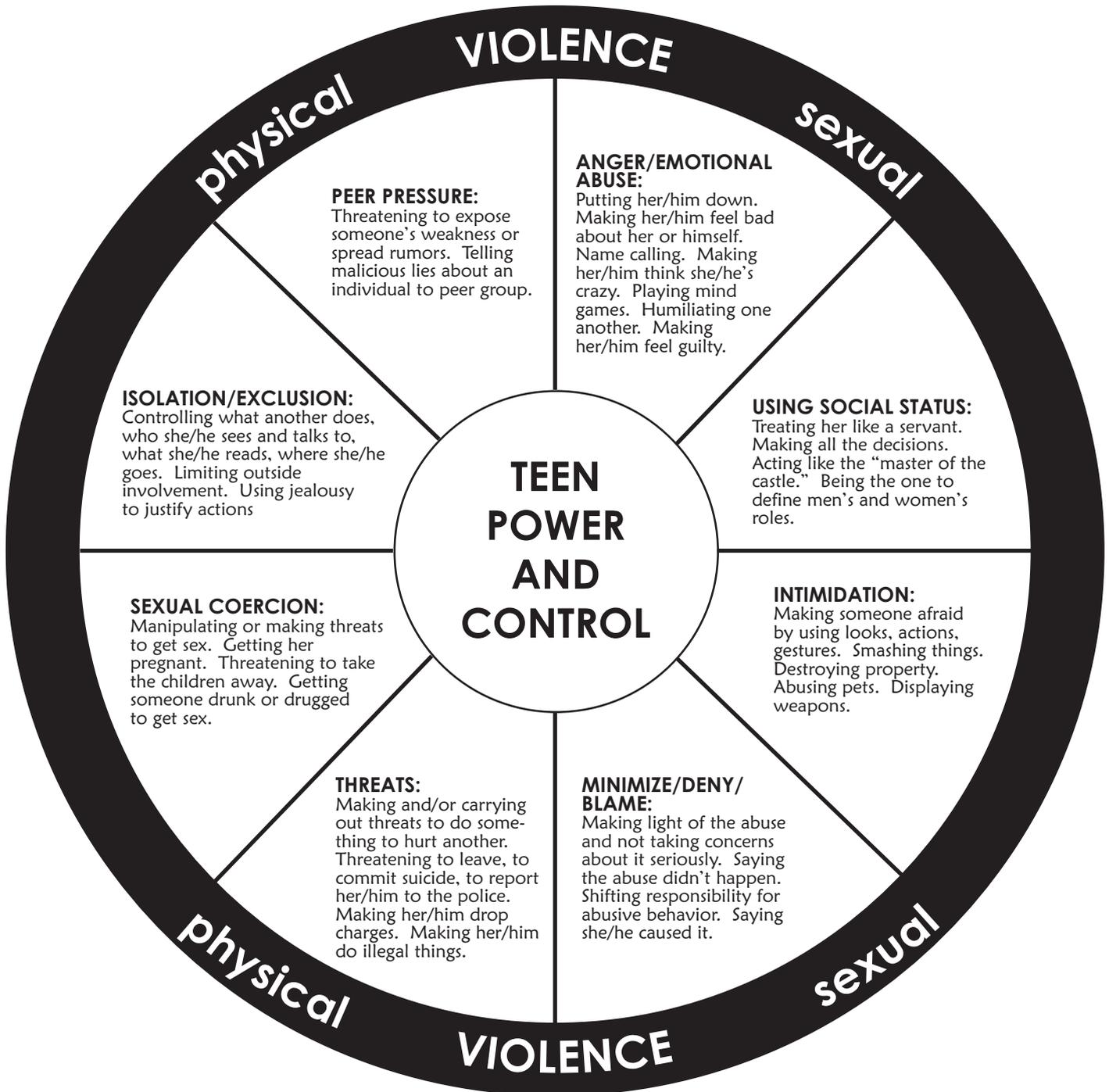
References:

Adapted from: Domestic Abuse Intervention Project

National Centre on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

TEEN EQUALITY

Copy this wheel for each learner



References:

Adapted from: Domestic Abuse Intervention Project

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LYRICS	WHEEL/ SEGMENT	REASON
<p>Now there's gravel in our voices Glass is shattered from the fight In this tug of war you'll always win Even when I'm right 'Cause you feed me fables from your hand With violent words and empty threats</p> <p>'Love The Way You Lie Part II' Rihanna, featuring Eminem</p>	<p>Power and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation • Anger/Emotional Abuse • Threats 	<p>Lyrics describe a fight where things were broken; there's an inability to control temper and damage to property (intimidation). Lyrics describe 'violent words (emotional abuse) and threats'.</p>
<p>I slipped my hand under her skirt I said don't worry, it's not gonna hurt Oh, my reputation's kinda clouded with dirt That's why you sleep with one eye open But that's the price you pay</p> <p>'Girl with One Eye' Florence & the Machine</p>	<p>Power and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Coercion • Intimidation • Threats 	<p>Lyrics describe sexual coercion and/or sexual abuse. Lyrics describe feeling afraid or needing to keep a watch out/'one eye open' (intimidation/threats).</p>
<p>I bust the windows out your car And no it didn't mend my broken heart I'll probably always have these ugly scars But right now I don't care about that part I bust the windows out your car After I saw you laying next to her I didn't wanna but I took my turn I'm glad I did it cuz you had to learn</p> <p>'Bust your Windows' Jazmine Sullivan</p>	<p>Power and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation • Violence 	<p>Lyrics describe damage to property (intimidation). Lyrics mention 'scars' although it is unclear whether these are physical (violence) or emotional.</p>
<p>Have you ever felt you ever want to kill her? And you mix them emotions with tequila And you mix that with a little bad advice On one of those bad nights, ya'll have a bad fight And you talking 'bout her family, her aunts and shit And she say "Motherfucker, yo momma's a bitch!" You know, domestic drama and shit, all that attitude I'll never hit a girl, but I'll shake the shit outta you!</p> <p>'Bittersweet Poetry' Kanye West featuring John Mayer</p>	<p>Power and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation • Threats • Minimise/deny /blame • Violence 	<p>Lyrics describe a fight, exacerbated by alcohol, and the inability to control temper (intimidation). Lyrics mention her escalating the fight by insulting his mother before he uses violence which suggests that she provoked the violence (minimising/blaming). Lyrics include violence such as shaking which may be actual or threatened (violence, threats)</p>
<p>When he calls to me, I am ready I'll wash his feet with my hair if he needs Forgive him when his tongue lies through his brain Even after three times, he betrays me</p> <p>'Judas' Lady GaGa</p>	<p>Power and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Social Status • Emotional abuse 	<p>Lyrics describe subservient or servant-like behaviour (using social status of men to subdue women), which may also be seen as humiliating or demeaning (emotional abuse).</p>
<p>You, with your words like knives And swords and weapons that you use against me You have knocked me off my feet again Got me feeling like I'm nothing</p> <p>'Mean' Taylor Swift</p>	<p>Power and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Abuse 	<p>Lyrics describe words that make her feel 'like nothing'/worthless (emotional abuse).</p>
<p>This house is too huge, if you move out I'll burn all two thousand Square feet of it to the ground, ain't shit you can do about it 'Cause with you I'm in my fuckin' mind, without you I'm out it</p> <p>'Love The Way You Lie Part II' Rihanna</p>	<p>Power and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat • Intimidation 	<p>Lyrics refer to the threats that if she leaves he will burn down the house (threat, intimidation).</p>

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LYRICS	WHEEL/ SEGMENT	REASON
<p>You think I'm pretty Without any makeup on You think I'm funny When I tell the punchline wrong I know you get me So I let my walls come down, down</p> <p>'Teenage Dream' Katy Perry</p>	<p>Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-threatening Behaviour • Trust and Support • Communication • Self-Confidence 	<p>Lyrics are affirming and non-threatening. He is affirming of her beauty and wit, contributing to her confidence. She trusts him and can open up (trust, communication)</p>
<p>When I kiss you so good, Why would you wanna break up? When this loving is so good, Why would you wanna break up? When I hit that so good, Why would you wanna break up? When this feeling is so good, Why would you wanna break up?</p> <p>'Break up' Mario featuring Gucci Mane and Sean Garrett</p>	<p>Power and Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise/deny /blame • Violence 	<p>Lyrics suggest that the partner's unhappiness in the relationship is not a big deal or that other things are so good that it makes up for the unhappiness and the partner wanting to get out if it (minimising/ blaming)</p>
<p>Ooh there's somethin about kinda woman that can do for herself I look at her and it makes me proud There's something about her Somethin oh so sexy about kinda woman that don't even need my help She said she got it she got it No doubt, it's somethin about her Cause she work like a boss play like a boss</p> <p>'Miss Independent' Ne-yo</p>	<p>Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Trust and Support • Self-Confidence and personal growth • Shared power 	<p>Lyrics are affirming. He respects, supports, and is attracted by her confidence and independence. Her independence suggests confidence and shared power.</p>