

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

- ✓ 1. To help learners understand that breakups are a normal part of teen dating relationships; experiences can contribute to growth.
- ✓ 2. To help learners find respectful ways of breaking up or reacting to breakups.

45 minutes

Scenario Cards: 'Breaking Up is Hard To Do' (provided)

Hand-out: 'Tips for Doing Your Best in a Breakup' (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 To begin the lesson, tell the learners that this lesson is focused on break ups – something most people are familiar with but no one really likes to do, or have done to them. Explain to them that breaking up is a very normal part of growing up. People break up for many different reasons: their interests may change; they may find that they don't share the same values; perhaps they argue a lot or simply don't want to be with the other person anymore; maybe they have even met someone else or maybe don't want to be with anyone right now. Whatever the reasons, they have probably thought quite a lot about how or when to do it and may even have thought about whether things would get better with time or whether to give the relationship another chance. It is good for learners to give themselves time to think this decision through carefully, so that they don't hurt the other person unnecessarily. However, it is also important to take that step if the relationship is not working for the individual.
- 2 To equip learners with some of the skills they may need to break up with someone, this exercise will include four role-play scenarios. Ask for eight learners to volunteer to be actors in the scenarios.
- 3 Let the eight learners pair up into four couples. Give each pair one of the role-playing 'Scenario Cards' (provided). You can also add other scenarios to this exercise to make them relevant to your context, or to address events that may have been problematic in the school.
- 4 Send the 'couples' out of the classroom (or off to one corner) and give them 5 minutes to prepare for their roles. In the meantime, hand out the information sheet: 'Tips for Doing Your Best in a Breakup' to the rest of the class and have them read through it.
- 5 Let each of the couples act out their scenario. After each skit, facilitate a discussion by asking learners to use the information provided in the 'Tips for Doing Your Best in a Breakup' information sheet to answer the following questions for the respective scenarios:

COUPLE WHERE ONE THREATENS TO HARM THEMSELVES:

- a. How would you feel in this situation?
- b. Would this kind of manipulation make you stay in the relationship?
- c. What could you say to end the relationship?

PERSON DOING THE BREAKING UP RUSHES INTO IT WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO SAY AND ENDS UP BEING RUDE TO THEIR PARTNER:

- a. How would you feel if the person breaking up with you is rude to you?
- b. What is a better way of ending the relationship?

PERSON BREAKS UP WITH THEIR PARTNER OVER TEXT:

- a. How would you feel in this situation?
- b. Why may someone want to break up with their partner over text?
- c. What is a better way of ending the relationship?

PERSON DOESN'T ACTUALLY BREAK UP WITH THEIR PARTNER, BUT JUST ACTS AS IF THEY ARE ALREADY BROKEN UP:

- a. How would you feel in this situation?
- b. Why may someone act in this way?
- c. What is a better way of ending the relationship?



- 6 Remind learners that after making the decision to breakup, they need to tell the other person about their decision to leave the relationship. These are often awkward or difficult conversations as the other person is likely to feel rejected, sad, disappointed or hurt. Seeing their reaction may also be upsetting – even if breaking up is the right decision. The best approach is to try to be respectful, honest, and to avoid saying things that they will regret later. Brainstorm with learners some of the positive and respectful things they could say if they want to break up with someone.

Expect answers like:

- We like different things
- We are interested in different activities
- We don't share the same values
- We argue more than we have fun together
- I don't want to be in a relationship with anyone right now
- Our relationship is going too fast for me
- I have met someone else and I don't want to hurt you

TEACHER TIPS

General

Learners should identify with the experiences portrayed in this activity – even if they have not broken up with someone or have not been broken up with before. As a result, the skits could get quite rowdy, long, or be too graphic or forceful when acting out (for example, where the person is rude or threatens to harm themselves). This exercise therefore requires strong facilitation to keep it on track.

Breaking up is a hard situation for both parties involved, as they can both feel hurt that the relationship has ended. This exercise is useful in that it creates an awareness of what breaking up means, and how it can be managed in the most respectful way possible.

Making the Link with Gender and Violence

Just like in adult domestic relationships, teens who break up with their dating partner (especially young women) are at high risk of violence as a result of doing so. Even where partners are not physically violent, the person breaking up may be subjected to emotional abuse, manipulation or threats. These aspects of teen relationships are seldom discussed and the emphasis on adult domestic violence often makes teens – especially young women – underestimate their risks.

Assessment Ideas

- 1 Ask learners to write a personal reflection on a situation where they have either broken up a relationship or been broken up with. Ask them to describe how it felt, and what they would do differently if given the opportunity. If the learner has not experienced a breakup, ask them to imagine the circumstances of someone who has.
- 2 Write a fictitious letter to an 'Agony Aunt' advice column in a local newspaper or a popular magazine. Ask learners to write the 'Agony Aunt's' response to the letter. You may choose to make the partners in the letter same-sex partners to encourage learners to think about how breaking up, responses to it, and our societal expectations of appropriate behaviour, may be similar or different for same-sex partners.



'BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO' SCENARIO CARDS

Print. Cut out a card for each role-playing couple.

You want to break up with your partner who says that they don't want your relationship to end. She/he cries and threatens to commit suicide. She/he says that they can't live without you.

You want to break up with your partner but you don't know how to have that conversation with them because you know it's not going to go well. You decide to send them a text telling them "we R thru."

You want to break up with your girl/boyfriend. You haven't thought things through; you rush into the conversation and end up being really rude when you tell them that you don't want to be with them anymore.

You want to break up with your partner but you don't know what to say to them. You decide to just act as if things are already over between you.

TIPS FOR DOING YOUR BEST IN A BREAKUP

Breaking up with someone is never easy. Follow these tips to on how to do so respectfully and safely:

- **Be clear about the fact that you want to break up.** Say things like: “I want to break up” or “I want us to be friends, but not go out.”
- **Be clear about your reasons for breaking up** and be sure that ending the relationship is what you want to do. If you’re sure, it’s OK to stick to your decision, even if the other person might be hurt by your decision or doesn’t want to break up.
- **Think before you speak.** Think about what you’ll say and how the other person might react. Thinking about the other person’s point of view and feelings can help you prepare for their reaction, and be sensitive in your response.
- **Never tell someone you want to break up as a way of manipulating them** or getting them to do something you want to do.
- **Tell your partner about your decision in person.** Respect the fact that you have shared something together and tell your partner face-to-face. Don’t do it through a friend, on the phone, or through a letter (unless you are concerned about violence). Don’t do it in front of other people.
- **Don’t do it when you are in a place that is too isolated.** Be sure other people can hear you in case things get out of control – even if you are not concerned about violence.
- **Talk to someone you trust.** It can help to talk through your feelings with a trusted friend but be sure the person you confide in can keep it private until you have your actual break-up conversation with your boyfriend or girlfriend. Parents, older sisters/brothers or trusted adults are often good sounding boards and are unlikely to tell others or let it slip out accidentally.
- **Give the person some space.** You can send them a friendly message or have a conversation that lets them know you care about how they are doing but don’t crowd them or harass them. Give them time to work through their feelings – they may not be ready to be friends with you right away.

References:

Adapted from Teenshealth.org