

# How to end an unhealthy relationship

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Our relationships with people, whether they are between friends, significant others or family, are an essential part of life. But some relationships may be toxic, and one Baylor College of Medicine expert discusses the importance of being able to end an unhealthy relationship.

"An unhealthy or 'toxic' [relationship](#) is considered a relationship that is not pleasurable and may bring more distress than enjoyment to a person. It also could be a relationship that may cause some level of regression or returning to a previous state of being that was not healthy," said Dr. Karen Lawson, a clinical psychologist and assistant professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor.

When someone is very negative, complains frequently and does not have a healthy or optimistic viewpoint of their life or the world, and brings your outlook down when you may otherwise be optimistic, is an example of an unhealthy relationship, Lawson said.

Another example Lawson gave might be when you are in a friendship with someone who only wants to engage in inappropriate or dangerous activities.

Moving into the [family](#) domain, Lawson said an example of an unhealthy relationship can be when family members get together but certain discussions tend to come up that are not productive or enjoyable. You may feel obligated to participate in these family gatherings even though the interactions you are having are not positive.

To help end an unhealthy relationship, Lawson offered the following advice:

- Generally, the first step is to recognize that the relationship is unhealthy.
- A good second step may be to try to understand why the relationship is not healthy and look at the dynamics of the relationship.
- Then it is time to make some decisions about the relationship. This could mean attending fewer of the family gatherings or simply not continuing to make plans with someone who is

unhealthy for you to be around.

- You also can try to have an honest conversation with the person whom you feel is making the relationship unhealthy. This can be hard, but you will not know if the dynamics can be changed unless you try.
- If the person is receptive to your feedback, you can then evaluate whether you still want to proceed with the relationship. However, if it is clear that the person is not going to change, then you may need to consider ending the relationship completely.

Lawson emphasized the importance of periodically evaluating whether your relationships are still positive and enjoyable. With our busy schedules, free time can be limited so it is essential that when we do spend time with someone, we really enjoy the time.

"Relationships should for the most part be reciprocal, or balanced in terms of give and take. Feeling bad about ourselves or the [time](#) spent together with someone is a strong clue that the relationship is unhealthy," Lawson said.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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