

# Healthy Relationships

## "Butterflies"



**Y**ou get butterflies when you think of them, your heart races when you see them. You're young, you're in love, it's forever.

Quite often, it can be. When you are in a healthy relationship you feel respected, supported and cared for - the best version of yourself. There is communication, honesty and laughter. But there is also the space for you both to be with friends and family, doing the things you love to do and to grow as individuals. It's not always picture-perfect, but you're safe and you're loved.

Sometimes, however, the lines can become blurred and you start to feel things you didn't before. You love him - but you're afraid of him too. You can feel like you're not good enough and that you should change. He gets jealous and controlling. He checks your phone and your social media accounts. He pressurises you into spending all your time with him. He pushes you into doing things you're not sure you want to do. He accuses you, insults you, threatens you or leaves you feeling humiliated. You can feel like you're 'walking on eggshells'. If it feels scary, then it is abuse.

Dating abuse can take different forms. Physical and sexual abuse will be more identifiable but your boyfriend doesn't have to hit you to be abusing you. Emotional, psychological and financial abuse can be more subtle and much harder to detect. Any form of abuse is wrong, there is no excuse and it's never your fault.

One in three young people will experience dating abuse. You're not alone and there are people who will listen, believe and support you.

It can happen very gradually, but you shouldn't isolate yourself. Relationships that are not healthy are based on power and control, not love and respect. The more you isolate yourself, the more control someone will have over you. It's important to identify someone you trust who you can talk to and confide in.

If you are in immediate physical danger, always ring 999.

Don't forget to look out for your friends as well. It can look like they've pushed you away if they choose to spend all their time with a boyfriend - you don't know what's going on behind closed doors. Try and be there for them if they reach out to you.

A person will only change if they want to, you cannot force them to change if they don't accept that their behaviour is wrong. But you can make the changes in your own life to stay safe and feel valued. And remember, you don't have to be in a relationship, even if it seems like everyone around you is. Happiness starts from within and the most important relationship is the one you have with yourself.

Ending a relationship is never easy, even when you know you have to for your own well-being. You might feel like your world is over, but remember:

"Just when the caterpillar thought its world was over - it became a butterfly."

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