Teacher's slide

Key lesson information

Location	Classroom with no student access to internet
Recommended time	60 minutes
Objectives	By the end of the session, students should be able to: • Describe ways to have a constructive dialogue • Assess different methods of ending a relationship • Explain how to manage emotions during the end of a relationship
Main student tasks	1. Reflect on initial ideas about improving and ending relationships 2. Consider the complexities of relationships 3. Create a list of 'do's to support effective communication 4. Compare different methods of ending a relationship 5. Give examples of emotions associated with break ups and techniques to manage them 6. Give advice to a young person about respectfully ending a relationship
Keywords	Relationship, conflict, constructive dialogue, grounding techniques

Teacher preparation

Provide	Lined paper, exercise books or laptops to work on.
Familiarise yourself	Unifrog's **Know-how library** tool (Student side>Know-how library). Students can use this for independent research after the lesson.

Know-how library

Know-how library	Open the 'student side' of your Unifrog account and click these links: • Accessing support for relationship endings • Building healthy romantic relationships Students can also search for these guides using the Know-how library tool.

Tracking progress on Unifrog

Add as an Interaction	Click Advanced view>Sort by school leaving year>[filter for specific students]>+interaction.
Track on Charts	Click Usage charts>Customise and filter> 'Know-how library: Favouriting over time'.
Tracking individual students	Advanced view>Sort by>Library profiles in Favourites

Benchmarks and standards

PSHE Association	Healthy, positive relationships; Harmful relationship behaviours; Mental health and wellbeing
CASEL 5	Relationship skills
ISCA	SE:A1:11; SE:A1:13; SE:A2:2; SE:A2:3; SE:A2:5; SE:B1:1; SE:B1:4
Skills	Caring, Communication, Listening, Resilience / staying positive

Teacher's slide – guidance on relationships and break-ups

This lesson covers the topics of relationships, conflict, and relationship endings. This slide gives a brief guide for teachers for handling these topics sensitively.

Remember that 'relationships' include all kinds of connections we have with others. The relationship characteristics discussed in this lesson should be applicable to all types of connections, sexual orientations, gender identities, and backgrounds.

Students will have varied experiences of and knowledge about relationships. There is no expectation for students to refer to their own or their family's relationships as frames of reference. Distance topics from students by encouraging them to think and talk about sensitive topics in the third person. For example, help students think about what someone 'like them' might experience, feel, think, say, or do: 'Can you imagine a young person about your age, and who…?' 'How might you advise a friend in this scenario…?'

Students will have varied experiences of and knowledge about relationship endings. In the UK and US, 40-50% marriages end in divorce and in Great Britain there were 2.3million separated families in 2021. Although divorce rates vary across the globe, work on the assumption that students in your class may have witnessed the end of a relationship within their family. In a Canadian study, 23% of young people reported having a direct experience of a break-up themselves.

Talk to your school or college's mental health, wellbeing, pastoral, or safeguarding lead before delivering the lesson. This will flag to them that there may be students in your class seeking further help on this issue after your lesson. They should also provide you with support and guidance for covering sensitive issues.

Use ground rules for classroom discussions. This will help keep the discussion respectful. An example of a ground rule might be to remain honest and open, but to not directly discuss your own personal experiences or the private lives of others (i.e. leave out names and identifying descriptions from examples).

Encourage students to contribute, but allow them the right to pass on a question or activity. Students might feel uncomfortable discussing certain issues, so never force anyone to share or contribute.

Teenagers are still developing their emotion regulation skills. Because of the way that human brains develop, young people feel the highs and lows of friendships and relationships more intensely during adolescence. Even though this is a completely normal stage of human brain development, teenagers are often be shamed for being "too emotional" about arguments with friends or relationship breakups. Even if you think the reason that they are upset is trivial, it feels very important and very intense to them. Try not to dismiss or minimise their feelings.

Relationships with domestic abuse can be extremely difficult for people to leave. Women are 70 times more likely to be killed in the weeks after leaving their abusive partner than at any other time during the relationship. There are several barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, including fear of the abuser's actions, lack of knowledge of how to access support, not having anywhere else to go, etc. If a student discloses information about abuse they've experienced or witnessed, refer this to your safeguarding lead.

Teacher's slide – FAQs

Students may have additional questions after completing this lesson. This page is intended to give you answers to questions that aren't covered in the main lesson.

Isn't a relationship just having a boyfriend or girlfriend? A relationship is just another word for a connection we have with others. For example, we can have a relationship with friends, family members, work colleagues, or a romantic partner. The characteristics of positive and negative relationships are relevant to lots of types of relationships.

How do I avoid conflict in my relationships? You can't avoid conflict. It's part of any relationship. How well you manage that conflict determines how successful your relationships are. It is possible to disagree with someone in a respectful way. The 'having a conversation vs. having an argument' activity helps you to reflect on how to have a constructive dialogue.

Isn't it better to stay in a relationship rather than end it? Whether you want to be in a relationship is always your choice and any relationship that makes you unhappy is worth leaving.

Why is it bad to block out your feelings after a breakup? I don't want to wallow in sadness, I want to just get on with my life! Trying to ignore or block out feelings like anger, sadness, grief or frustration can lead to physical stress on your body. In order to "get over" a relationship in a healthy way, you need to allow yourself to feel your feelings for a while. It sounds counter-intuitive, but allowing yourself to feel your feelings allows you to let go of them more easily. If you try to supress or ignore them, it's harder to let them go. Acknowledging your feelings is not the same as "wallowing" – allowing yourself some time to process what has happened before you move on is the healthiest strategy.

What happens if I break up with someone then later decide I want to get back with them? When grieving a relationship, missing your partner or questioning the break-up can be very common. An American study found that 10-17% of married couples separated and then got back together again. What is most important is to prioritise your own wellbeing as the grieving process might be more difficult to cope with for a second time.

Why do some people stay in unhealthy or abusive relationships? Why don't they end the relationship? Women are 70 times more likely to be killed in the weeks after leaving their abusive partner than at any other time during the relationship. There are several barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, including fear of the abuser's actions, lack of knowledge of how to access support, not having anywhere else to go, etc. The organisations at the end of this presentation can be contacted to discuss any concerns about relationships, including domestic abuse.

How can you deal with someone who just wants to argue and who won't discuss conflict constructively? If you feel unsafe, you should talk to a teacher, school counselor/nurse, GP, or support organisation for advice. There are lots of organisations that can help at the end of this presentation.

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Respectful relationships: ending relationships

To end or not to end? (5 mins)

Jade has just told her partner that she hasn't been feeling happy for the past few weeks, which came as a surprise to them. Jade wonders if she might be happier being single rather than in a relationship. She feels guilty as she doesn't want to hurt her partner. She has really enjoyed parts of their relationship and fears that she might regret it if she ends the relationship.

Write down at least **one** example of:

1. Something Jade could do if she decides to try to **improve** the relationship.

2. Something Jade could do if she decides to **end** the relationship.

The complexities of a relationship (10 mins)

Some famous people have offered these words of wisdom about relationships:

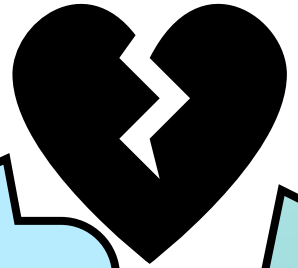
‘Sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together.’

Marilyn Monroe

‘The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return.’ Moulin Rouge (film)

‘Love is a choice. It's not something that just happens to you.’

Nicholas Sparks



‘Love is like a brick. You can build a house, or you can sink a dead body.’

Lady Gaga

‘The heart was made to be broken.’

Oscar Wilde

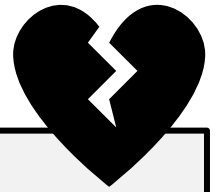
‘Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened.’

Dr Seuss

‘It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.’

Alfred Lord Tennyson

The complexities of a relationship



Pick **at least one** quote and answer these questions:

1. What does the quote mean to you?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the idea expressed in the quote? Why?

A) 'Sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together.'

B) 'It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.'

C) 'Love is like a brick. You can build a house, or you can sink a dead body.'

D) 'Love is a choice. It's not something that just happens to you.'

E) 'The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return.'

F) 'The heart was made to be broken.'

G) 'Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened.'

Having a conversation vs. having an argument (10 mins)

Resolving conflicts can be difficult. Often, when people disagree, they get into an **argument** rather than a **constructive conversation**. In arguments, people often…

Argue whilst emotions are at their highest intensity

Fail to acknowledge the other person's emotions

Withdraw or change the subject if they don't agree

Focus on differences more than similarities

Make assumptions

Try to 'win' or persuade the other

Place blame, e.g. '**you** did this'

In your opinion, which of these behaviours is **most likely** to cause an argument?

Why? Give **at least one** reason.

Having a conversation vs. having an argument

Instead of arguing, we can use the principles of **constructive conversations** to effectively resolve disagreements. Select at least three of the **don't** statements and change them into **dos**. Click to see an example!

Don't argue whilst emotions are at their highest intensity

Don't ignore the other person's emotions

Don't withdraw or change the subject if you don't agree

Don't focus on differences more than similarities

Don't make assumptions about the other person

Don't try to 'win' or persuade the other person

Don't place blame, e.g. '**you** did this'

Having a conversation vs. having an argument

Instead of arguing, we can use the principles of **constructive conversations** to effectively resolve disagreements. Select at least three of the **don't** statements and change them into **dos**. Click to see an example!

Do wait until you're feeling calm to talk about things

Don't ignore the other person's emotions

Don't withdraw or change the subject if you don't agree

Don't focus on differences more than similarities

Don't make assumptions about the other person

Don't try to 'win' or persuade the other person

Don't place blame, e.g. '**you** did this'

How to break up (15 mins)

Researchers in America asked teenagers to rate the social acceptability of six different ways of breaking up, out of ten.

a) Getting a friend to tell them for you

b) Telling them in person

c) Telling them via text message

d) Changing your status to single on social media

e) Telling them via social media message

f) Telling them over the phone

Guess the **order** that participants ranked the break-up methods, from **most** (1st) to **least** (6th) socially acceptable.

How to break up

1st 8.4 out of 10	**b)** Telling them in person
2nd 5.4 out of 10	**f)** Telling them over the phone
3rd 3.4 out of 10	**c)** Telling them via text message
Joint 4th 2.7 out of 10	**a)** Getting a friend to tell them for you **d)** Changing your status to single on social media **e)** Telling them via social media message

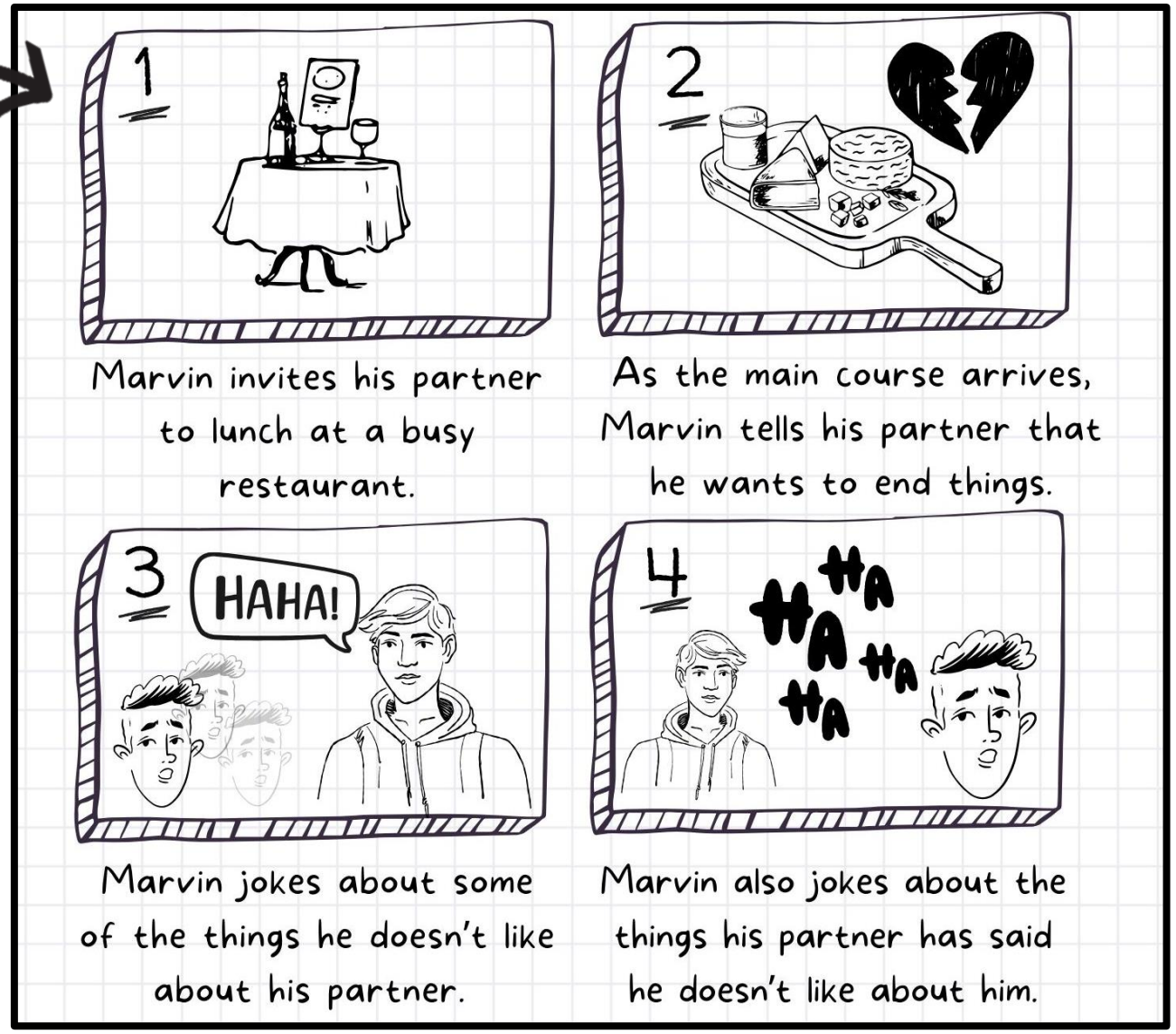
Why do you think teenagers consider it most socially appropriate to break up **in person**?

What reasons might someone have to **not** break up by telling them in person?

How to break up

Scenario: Marvin wants to break up with his partner. He knows that **in person** is considered best.

1. What issues might there be with how Martin handled this **in person** break up?
2. What could Martin have done instead?



Constructive break up (15 mins)

58% of Americans say that break ups are usually dramatic or messy

What **emotions** might people associate with break ups?

Have you tried to use **grounding techniques** before? Do you know what they are?

When emotions are heightened, it can be helpful to '**anchor**' your attention back to the body, by focusing on any of the five senses. This could be as simple as taking a deep breath in or touching your fingers with your thumb.

Constructive break up

Here are some grounding activities. Pick **at least one** and suggest the activity you could do to feel more anchored. One has been done for you.

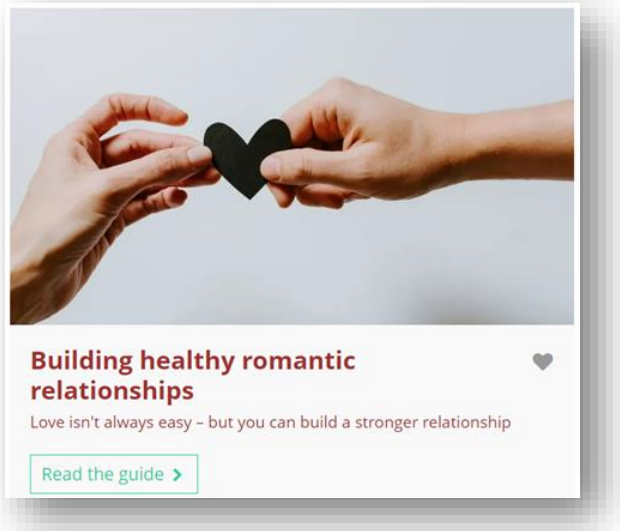
1. **Counting** *backwards from 100*	6. **Letter writing**
2. **Naming objects**	7. **Muscle relaxation**
3. **Word association**	8. **Mindful observation**
4. **Physical movement**	9. **Mantra repetition**
5. **Breathing patterns**	10. **Guided imagery**

Independent learning

It can be difficult to know which information you can trust online.

The **Know-how library** is a reliable source of information about this topic and lots of others.

Search by the keyword ‘relationship’ in the Know-how library to find guides on this topic. Remember to favourite guides you’d like to come back to later!



Three... two... one (5 mins)

Jade *(whose situation you read about at the start of the lesson)* has decided to break up with her partner. She decides that doing this in person would be best for the couple.

3

Write down **three** tips to help Jade have a **constructive conversation**.

2

Write down **two grounding techniques** to help her manage her emotions.

1

Write down **one** thing she could do to end the relationship **respectfully**.

Organisations that help with relationship issues

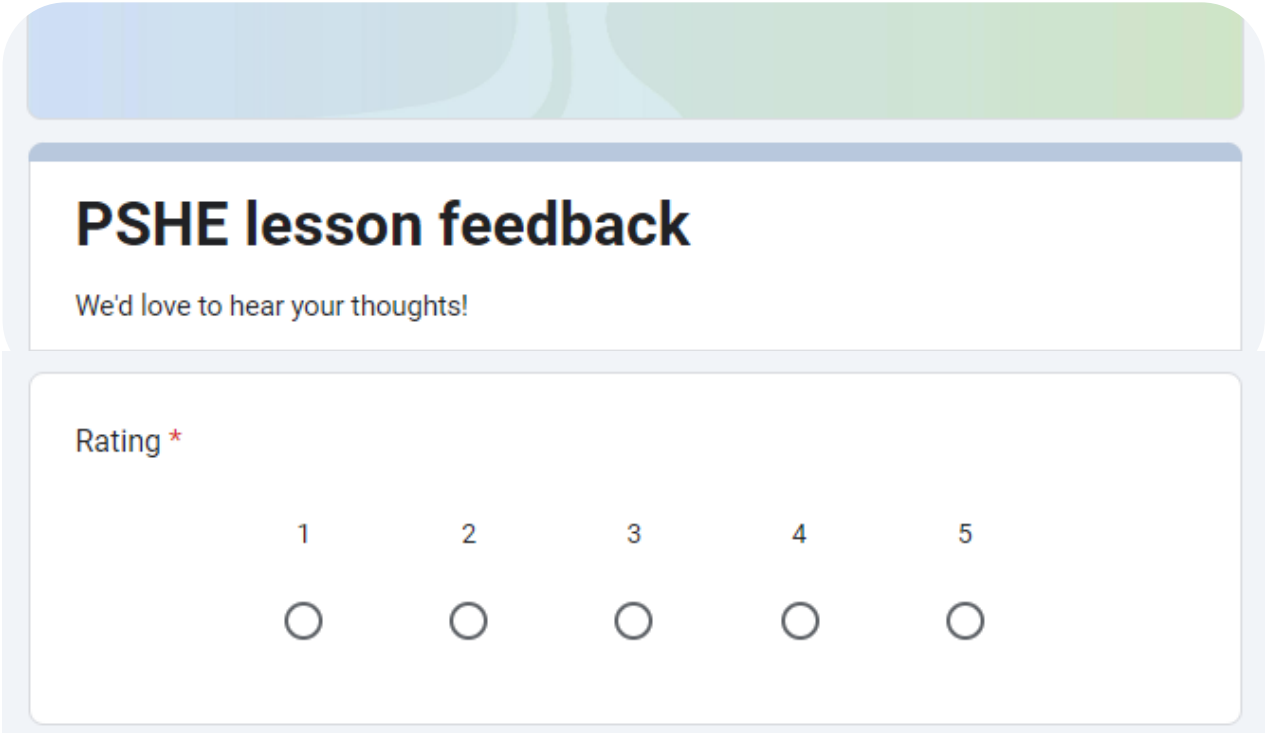
Searching ‘relationship advice’ in your internet browser will bring up helpful resources and guide you with the first step in finding support.

- **NSPCC** (charity supporting children and young people) - nspcc.org.uk
- **Childline** (advice for children and young people) - childline.org.uk
- **Mind** (mental health support) - mind.org.uk
- **Relate** (support for young adults with relationship problems) - relate.org.uk
- **Galop** (support for abuse within LGBTQ+ relationships) - galop.org.uk
- **Childhelp** (US based support for children and young people) - childhelphotline.org
- **Childnet** (international charity supporting young people with a range of issues) - childnet.com/young-people
- **Reach Out** (mental health support for young people in Australia) - au.reachout.com
- **Child Helpline International** (support for children and young people around the world) - childhelplineinternational.org

We’d love your feedback!

What did you think of this lesson? We’d love to hear from you!

Click here to rate this lesson out of 5. You can also add a comment if you have time!



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