



# Contract With Myself

I, \_\_\_\_\_, define the following behaviors as abuse.  
I promise never to commit them or tolerate them in a relationship for any reason:

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I define the following behaviors as 'respect' in a relationship. I will try to behave in these respectful ways in my relationships.

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If I experience abuse in a relationship, or want to help someone else who I think might be in an abusive relationship, the persons or agencies I will call for help are:

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Should I Stay or Should I Go?

**The decision to end a difficult relationship, or to stay and keep trying to make it better, is always a hard one. The purpose of this activity is to help you figure out what's the best move for you.**

Below, list every reason you can think of for continuing to work at the relationship, and every reason you can think of to end the relationship.

Reasons to Stay

Reasons to Go

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Not every reason you have listed will have equal weight in your decision – go back and put 2 stars next to the reasons that have 'double weight' (or 3 stars for triple weight) in your decision.

Here are some more things to think about if you haven't already. Consider how your relationship has affected the following areas of your life, or your partner's life. Add them to your list if they apply.

- Physical health
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Goals in life
- Finances
- Friendships
- School or work attendance / performance
- Activities you enjoy
- Children
- Spirituality

You may want to talk over your list with someone you trust, to make sure it is complete and honest.



**CHECKPOINT:** Are you ready to make a decision about whether to stay or go?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what is it? \_\_\_\_\_



# Goals For Improving My Relationship

*If you have decided to stay and work on a relationship that is difficult, even painful or abusive, then it is important to be clear about what needs to change and how you plan to make those changes happen. A couple of things to keep in mind:*

- Ⓒ You can not make your partner change. You can let your partner know what changes you plan to make, and what changes you would like him or her to make, but it is up to your partner to decide whether he or she will change or not.
- Ⓒ You are not responsible for your partner's actions. If your partner is abusive, changing your behavior will not make the abuse stop.

Start with listing what you've tried that has **not** worked to improve your relationship in the past.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now list what **has** worked to improve the relationship in the past.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the things that **must** change in order for you to continue this relationship?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now set goals for those changes to happen.

Goal 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is responsible for making this goal happen? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the steps that will need to be taken to achieve this goal? \_\_\_\_\_

When will I reevaluate this goal to see if it has been achieved? \_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if the goal is reached? \_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if the goal is not reached? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Goals For Improving My Relationship

(continued)

Goal 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is responsible for making this goal happen? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the steps that will need to be taken to achieve this goal? \_\_\_\_\_

When will I reevaluate this goal to see if it has been achieved? \_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if the goal is reached? \_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if the goal is not reached? \_\_\_\_\_

Goal 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is responsible for making this goal happen? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the steps that will need to be taken to achieve this goal? \_\_\_\_\_

When will I reevaluate this goal to see if it has been achieved? \_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if the goal is reached? \_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if the goal is not reached? \_\_\_\_\_

**To add more goals, get another copy of this page or write goals on the back.**



# Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

**Ending a relationship is never easy.** You have probably invested a lot in your relationship, and ending it may mean many changes in your life. It might help to remember that you have grown from your experiences in this relationship – even from the most painful parts of it – and what you have learned from this relationship can help to make future relationships more successful. Also remember that you have the right to end a relationship any time you want to.

## How do I end the relationship?

That depends. If your partner has ever been violent or threatened violence, even once, then it is very important that you have a safety plan in place before you break up. Work with your counselor to complete the Safety Plan in this workbook.

## If you have no concerns about your physical safety:

1. First, be clear about your reasons for breaking up, and be sure that ending the relationship is what you want to do. It's normal to be ambivalent about ending a relationship, but never tell someone you want to break up with them as a way of manipulating them or getting them to do something you want them to do. Don't say you want to break up if you don't mean it.  
What are your reasons for ending the relationship? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Are you sure that breaking up is what you want to do? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Choose a time when you have plenty of time to talk about your reasons for the breakup and for both of you to express your feelings. (However, don't be surprised or angry if your partner does not want to talk about it too much and leaves abruptly. This is his or her way of saying s/he is overwhelmed with emotions and needs some time and space.)  
This is when I will tell my partner: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Choose a quiet, private place to let your partner know in person that you want to end the relationship. Don't do it on the phone, through a friend or by letter (unless you are concerned about violence).  
This is where I will tell my partner: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Be clear, honest and 'firm but gentle' when telling your partner you want to end the relationship. Don't be wishy-washy, because it might lead your partner to think he or she can change your mind. Don't give false hope. But don't be cruel either – there is no reason to put your partner down or try to make him/her feel bad. Use your assertiveness skills and "I" messages.  
These are the words I will use to let my partner know I want to end the relationship:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. It's OK to agree to be friends, but it's a good idea to limit your time together so you can both move on. And don't be surprised if your partner does not want to be friends – it may be too painful to be around you. However, even if you decide you can't be friends, you can still respect your ex and the relationship you had by being polite and by not badmouthing him/her.
6. Be prepared to cope with difficult feelings about breaking up, so you don't end up going back to a relationship you really don't want to be in. Work with your counselor to complete the worksheet on Dealing with a Breakup.



# Dealing With A Breakup

*If you've decided to end a relationship, it's a good idea to be prepared for your partner's reaction as well as your own feelings.*

## How will my partner react when I end the relationship?

There's no way to be sure, but below are some **normal** reactions to a breakup. Check the ways your partner might react.

- Disbelief, even if you think your partner should have seen it coming
- Crying
- Some degree of anger directed towards you, but no violence or threats
- Acting as if he or she doesn't care
- Making some effort to get you to change your mind, but without threats or coercion
- Denying that it is really over by saying that he or she believes that you'll get back together someday – but without making scary threats
- Trying to hurt you by saying mean things
- Wanting a detailed reason for the breakup, and having a hard time accepting the reason you give
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Most of the above reactions are examples of defense mechanisms – ways of protecting oneself from hurt feelings. The best way to deal with this kind of reaction is to just let your partner use whatever defenses s/he needs to protect him or herself at this time. Your partner's anger at you will probably go away with time. In the mean time, you should have someone you trust to talk to about your feelings.

Below are reactions to a breakup that are **NOT normal or acceptable** and require you to get HELP from a trusted adult or the police. Check the ways you think your partner might react.

- Any violence or threats of violence
- Words that scare you like "I will never let you go" or "If I can't have you no one can"
- Threats of suicide, stated clearly like "I'll kill myself if you leave me" or implied like "I can't go on living without you"
- Refusing to 'let you' breakup by not letting you leave, or refusing to leave you alone
- Stalking you after the breakup: following you, calling constantly, or having you watched
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you checked any of the boxes above, you should have a safety plan in place before breaking up.

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## Dealing With A Breakup

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### How Will I Feel After the Breakup?

Below are some **normal** feelings you may experience, along with suggestions for how to deal with them:

- Sadness and frequent crying.** This should begin to slow down after a week or two. It's OK to let yourself be sad and cry – even though you wanted the breakup, you are experiencing a real loss. One healthy way to work through your confusing feelings is to write about them in a journal. Start here by writing some of the feelings you are having while thinking about breaking up.

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- Feelings of loneliness and missing your partner.** You should let yourself experience these feelings, but don't isolate yourself for too long. Now is the time to re-connect with your friends and family, and get involved with a project or hobby or other activities. Write names of people or activities that can help you cope with the loneliness.

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- Guilt.** There's no way to get around someone getting hurt when a relationship ends. You and your partner will both get through it and grow from the experience. Console yourself by knowing that you did the best thing for your partner by being honest and ending the relationship at the right time; it would have hurt your partner more to string him or her along. Write this sentence in the space below, and remind yourself whenever necessary: *"I have the right to end a relationship. I am making the best decision for me."*

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- Questioning yourself about whether you did the right thing.** It is normal to have some doubts, but it is not a good idea to call up your partner and tell him or her about them. This might give your partner false hope and hurt them more, or lead you both into a painful 'on again - off again' cycle. The best thing is to talk about these doubts with someone in your support system, and remind yourself of all of the reasons you made the decision to break up in the first place.

Who will you talk to when you're questioning your decision?

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Remind yourself: What are the biggest reasons for your decision to end the relationship?

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- Other** \_\_\_\_\_

Below are some **more serious** reactions to a breakup that you could experience. These reactions mean that you need help from a counselor or doctor. List the people or organizations you will go to for help if you experience each problem:

- Feelings of extreme depression and loneliness that do not go away after a short period \_\_\_\_\_
- Thoughts about hurting or killing yourself \_\_\_\_\_
- Loss or gain of more than a few pounds \_\_\_\_\_
- Use of drugs or alcohol as a way of dealing with the pain \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



# Safety Plan

**SECTION A: If you have decided to stay in a relationship that has been violent in the past**  
*If your partner has been violent in the past, chances are very good it will happen again - even if your partner promised it wouldn't. You may not want to think about that possibility, but for your own safety, it's best to be prepared just in case. Remember, you do not have control over your partner's violence, but you do have control over how you prepare for it and respond to it. Below are suggestions for doing so.*

1. Identify the 'cues' you have seen in the past right before your partner has been violent. Keep these in mind as warning signs, and when you see these things in the future you will know it is time to take action to protect yourself:

- Use of drugs/alcohol                       Jealousy                       Verbal abuse/put-downs  
 Embarrassing you in front of friends                       Disagreements about sex

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Write down the ways you have tried to protect yourself in the past that HAVE worked. In the future, as soon as you sense that your partner may become violent, do as many of these things as you can to protect yourself:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Now write down the ways you have tried to protect yourself in the past that HAVE NOT worked. Do not rely on these things in the future:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. When you sense there is going to be an argument, try to go to a place where other people might hear the arguing, and/or a place where there is less risk of injury. (Avoid kitchens, bathrooms, garage, anywhere near weapons or any room without an outside exit.)

Write the specific places you will try to avoid having an argument:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Write the numbers you can call for help when you sense that you are in danger:

(Always have these numbers and change for phone calls on you.)

Police: \_\_\_\_\_ Under what circumstances will you call? \_\_\_\_\_

Hotline: \_\_\_\_\_ Under what circumstances will you call? \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ Under what circumstances will you call? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Safety Plan

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6. Identify the people you can turn to for help who are willing to be a part of your safety plan:

<u>Name</u>	<u>How they will help</u>
At home: _____	_____
At work: _____	_____
Around the neighborhood: _____	_____
Other: _____	_____
Other: _____	_____

7. Choose a code word you will use to let the people above know when you need help: \_\_\_\_\_

8. If you need to get out of the house quickly when you are in danger, how will you escape?  
(Plan as many escape routes as possible, including using doors, windows, fire escapes, elevators, stairwells, etc. Practice the escape route.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. If you need to go to a safe location where your partner will not find you, where will you go?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. You may be able to get a certain type of order of protection that does not require your partner to stay away from you, but does order him or her not to abuse you. This way, your partner knows there will be more serious consequences if s/he is abusive. Who can help you get the order of protection?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. If you get an order of protection, you should carry a copy on you at all times and have copies at your home, work and anyplace else you are likely to be. Where will you keep copies of the order of protection (or who will hold them for you?)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Where will you go if you need medical care? \_\_\_\_\_  
How will you get there? \_\_\_\_\_  
Your insurance/Medicaid information or how you will pay for it: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Plan and practice some ways to increase your independence so you will be better prepared to make it on your own if you decide to end this relationship in the future:  
(You can become more independent financially, emotionally, socially, physically, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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# Safety Plan

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## SECTION B: If you have decided to break up with an abusive partner

***If you are in an abusive relationship – if your partner has ever been violent or threatened violence – it is very important to have a safety plan in place before attempting to end the relationship. While ending the relationship now is probably the best decision for you in the long run, you should know that the breakup period is the most dangerous time in an abusive relationship. Below are some strategies for increasing your safety.***

1. Plan the breakup carefully with the help of people you trust. If possible, involve a counselor from a local domestic violence services organization, friends, family members and co-workers who you trust. The more people who are aware of what's going on, the more people can look out for you and support you. Write the names of the people who will help you to carry out your breakup safety plan:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Getting an order of protection (or restraining order) is recommended if you think you might be in any danger. It is not a guarantee of safety, but it is a legal court order that says your ex-partner must stay away from you and can be arrested if he or she does not. This may scare your ex into leaving you alone. (See the worksheet on Orders of Protection, or ask a domestic violence services agency for help.)

Write where you can go to get an order of protection in your community:

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do not break up with your partner in an isolated place. Do it in public, with people around who are a part of your safety plan and know what's going on. If necessary for safety reasons, do it by phone or by letter.

Write where and when you will break up with your partner: \_\_\_\_\_

Write who will be around when you do it: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Be very clear with your partner that you are ending the relationship and that your decision is not negotiable.

Write down the words you will use: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Be prepared for your partner's reaction. It could be violent, or your partner could be very sweet and try to win you back.

Ways your partner might react:

How you will handle these reactions:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. After breaking up, avoid being alone with your ex-partner or being in a situation where s/he might try to corner you. You can change your routines, change your travel routes, ask a friend or family member to travel with you to work. Try not to go out alone, especially at night. Never open the door if your ex comes knocking, no matter how sweet or apologetic s/he sounds.

Write the routines you will have to change: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name the people who are willing to travel with you: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Plan what you will do if your ex shows up at your home: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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# Safety Plan

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## Section C: If you are breaking up with an abusive partner who you live with

*Breaking up with someone you live with is even more complicated.*

*Aside from following all of the steps in section B, take the extra precautions below before breaking up.*

1. Identify where you can stay, preferably a place where your partner will not find you:  
(If necessary get information about how to access a shelter from your local domestic violence hotline)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. If you are going to stay with a family member or friend where your partner might be able to find you, make sure that everyone living in the household is a part of your safety plan.
3. Get any important personal possessions, identification, documents, money, etc., out of your home before the breakup. Going back for them could be dangerous, or your partner could try to control you by destroying or 'holding hostage' things that you need.  
Write down the things you will remove from the home: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If you plan to stay where you live now and ask your partner to leave, change the locks so your partner doesn't have access to the home. (Do this before you break up or immediately after, and don't stay home alone until the locks are changed.)  
Write the name and number of the locksmith you will use, and how you will pay for it:  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. If you plan to stay where you live now, do not allow your ex-partner in the home when you're alone to get his or her belongings. Have him or her do this when you're not home. If you have an order of protection, you can request police be present when your partner picks up his/her things.  
Plan how you will stay safe when your partner gets his or her belongings:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION D: If you have a child or children with your abuser

*If you have a child or children with your abuser, your safety plan will also have to include making sure your children are safe physically and emotionally. In addition to the precautions above, make sure you do the following things for the safety of your children:*

1. Get counseling for your child(ren) and advice on how to help them deal with the emotional effects of witnessing the violence. Write where you will go for help with this: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Call the police or child welfare services if your partner abuses your child(ren). You are responsible for protecting your child(ren), and if your partner hurts them and you fail to seek help, you could be charged with neglect and the child(ren) could be taken away.
3. If your child(ren) are old enough, teach them how to use the phone to call the police or fire department. If you have a programmable phone, program these numbers on speed dial and teach the child(ren) when and how to use them.
4. If your child(ren) are old enough, teach them the escape plan in case they feel they are in danger.
5. Let anyone who cares for your child(ren) know who else has permission to visit or pick the child(ren) up. If you have an order of protection that includes the child(ren), make sure the school, day care or sitters have copies.



# Orders of Protection

**Getting an Order of Protection (also called a Restraining Order or Protective Order) is one step you can take to try to put a stop to abuse or harassment. It is not a guarantee of safety, but it can send a serious message to your abuser that you are not willing to put up with abuse.**

## What is an Order of Protection?

It is a legal order from a judge that sets strong limits on the abuser's contact with you. Every state is different, but in many states an order of protection can do the following things:

- ☆ Order the abuser to stay away from you. It may say the abuser can not come within a certain distance of you, your family, your home, your job or your school. It may also say the abuser can not call you, send you mail or write you notes.
- ☆ Order the abuser not to abuse you. Some types of orders of protection do not make the abuser stay away from you, but say the abuser can not physically hurt you or verbally abuse you.
- ☆ Order the abuser to move out if you live together. You can even request that a police officer come to your home when the abuser comes to get his/her personal belongings.
- ☆ Order the abuser to join a counseling or educational program for abusers.
- ☆ Give you temporary custody of any children you have with the abuser, and order that visits with the children be supervised by a social worker if the children have also been abused.

## How do I get an Order of Protection?

You have to apply for an order of protection in court - Family, Criminal or Supreme Court, depending on the situation. Usually, you can go to family court if you are/were married or have a child together. Otherwise you will have to go to criminal or supreme court. Here are some steps you should take:

- ☆ Notify the police during or immediately after an incident of abuse or harassment. This will help build your case in court. If police are involved, write the names of the responding officers here:

- ☆ Gather evidence of the abuse. Have a friend take a picture if you have any injuries, and get written statements from any witnesses.

List evidence here: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☆ Call a domestic violence or victim advocate agency to get advice. Many agencies have legal counselors who can tell you the specifics about orders of protection in your state, tell you which court to go to, accompany you to court, and provide free legal representation if necessary.

The agency you can call and its phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☆ Complete the forms and file for the order of protection at the appropriate court. You will have to write down details of the abuse, with dates and places. A counselor from a domestic violence services agency or the court clerk can help you. An emergency order of protection can be put in place immediately, and you will be given a hearing date.

Write the locations of your local Family, Criminal and Supreme Courts here:

Family Court: \_\_\_\_\_

Criminal Court: \_\_\_\_\_

Supreme Court: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☆ Go to the court hearing and tell your story to the judge. Be sure to have a supportive person with you. The abuser will probably be there and may try to upset or intimidate you. Make sure you get a certified copy of your order of protection.

## After getting an Order of Protection:

- ☆ Carry a copy of the order of protection with you at all times.
- ☆ If the abuser violates the order, report it to the police immediately.
- ☆ Do not make contact with the abuser.
- ☆ **Continue to follow your safety plan.** There are risks involved in getting an order of protection because it may make the abuser angry and more dangerous. Even though the abuser can be arrested if s/he violates the order, the abuser may still try to hurt you.