

Ending Relationships

DBT: Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

Destructive relationships hurt your safety, self-esteem, integrity, or quality of life. Ending a destructive relationship (romantic, platonic, or familial) can be very challenging but very necessary. This worksheet guides you through the process as suggested by Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT).

Safety first!

Is this relationship abusive? If so, call your state's domestic violence hotline, the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text START to 88788, or search the NO MORE Global Directory. These resources connect you to a professional who can help you leave safely.

Always check with wise mind

If the relationship is not abusive, check with wise mind. Ending a relationship is both a logical and an emotional decision - so you need access to both parts of your mind. Don't end an relationship when emotion mind is dominating. If you're feeling calm, think it through below:

How is the relationship problematic? Is it destructive?

What are the potential upsides of ending the relationship?

What are the potential downsides of ending the relationship?

Explore your options

Is the relationship important and not destructive? Is it reasonable to expect it can improve?

- Yes → Consider trying problem solving skills to repair the relationship
- No → When ending a relationship, follow these steps (work through them on the next page):
 - **Prepare:** Decide what to say and how to say it using DEAR MAN and parts of the GIVE FAST skills
 - **Practice:** Rehearse using the Cope Ahead skill
 - **Stick to it:** Use Opposite Action if you feel tempted to return to the relationship

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*



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Prepare, practice, and stick to it

D: Describe the facts

What problem is the reason you want to end the relationship?

E: Express your emotions

How does the relationship make you feel? Why does it need to end?

A: Assert your needs

State your decision directly, in a straightforward way.

R Reinforce positives

Why is ending the relationship good for both of you?

M: Stay mindful

What's your broken record phrase if they try to divert you?

A: Appear confident

What are apologetic phrases or behaviors you need to *avoid*?

N: Consider negotiating

Are you willing to negotiate at all? Think it through in advance.

V: Validate

How can you validate their feelings or wishes (even if you don't agree)?

E: Easy manner

How can you break the tension if you need to?

F: Be fair to both of you

Even if they disagree, your decision and feelings are still valid.

Cope Ahead: Decide if you will have this conversation in writing, on the phone, or in person. If in writing, have someone you trust read your message for judgmental or over-apologetic language. Otherwise, ask a friend to listen to you practice out loud and get their feedback on your levels of calm and confidence. Think ahead about how the other person will respond and what you will do.

Opposite Action: if reminders of the relationship, nostalgia, guilt, or loneliness pull you back in, do the opposite of your urge to get closer:

- Avoid the person - including reminders, communication, and places they often go (if possible)
- Distract yourself when thoughts of the person comes up
- Remind yourself why love no longer fits the facts of this situation

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Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

[Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



[Free Mental Health Worksheets](#)

Search our collection of therapy worksheets by mental health topic, therapy modality, or demographic group. Our free, psychologist-developed worksheets make therapy exercises understandable and relevant to daily life. Find worksheets for help with ADHD, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and other common mental health challenges.