



Relationship GPS: *Navigating Positive and Negative Relationship Behaviors*

Introduction and Sensitivity Warning: Today, we will be discussing negative behaviors in relationships, identifying those we have experienced, and sharing personal examples if we feel comfortable. This can be a sensitive topic for some. This discussion may bring up some challenging memories and emotions. It's important to approach this conversation with care and compassion for each other's experiences and of course, mutual respect and support.

Remain Mindful and Self Aware of Mind and Body: Please pay attention to your emotional state during the discussion. If you feel overwhelmed, it's okay to pause and take a deep breath or use another coping skill or even speak with the counselor/group leader if you need a short break. Grounding techniques can be effective so it may be helpful to review some of these; here is a concise list of practical grounding techniques that are easy to implement:

- **Deep Breathing:** Take slow, deep breaths. Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds.
- **5-4-3-2-1 Technique:** Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- **Counting Backwards:** Count backward from 100 by threes (100, 97, 94, etc.).
- **Describe Your Environment:** Take a break mentally and in your head observe and describe your surroundings in detail—colors, shapes, and textures.
- **Touchstone:** Hold a small object with personal significance (e.g., a rock, coin, or piece of jewelry) and focus on its texture, temperature, and weight.
- **Positive Imagery:** Visualize a safe, calm place and focus on the details—sights, sounds, smells.
- **Body Awareness:** Focus on how different parts of your body feel, starting from your toes and moving up to your head.
- If needed, speak with counselor and try: **Mindful Movement:** Stretch, get up and walk, or engage in gentle movement while paying attention to how your body feels.





Discussion: Identifying and Sharing Negative Behaviors - Take a moment to look at the list below and identify any behaviors you have experienced in your relationships. If you feel comfortable, please share any personal examples of these behaviors. Remember, sharing is voluntary and should be done in a way that feels safe for you. Group members should listen without judgment and offer support to those who choose to share. (Some process questions: *How did experiencing this behavior impact you? - What emotions come up?*)

Infidelity (Them): Partner engaging in romantic or sexual activities with someone other than one's partner without their knowledge or consent

Infidelity (You): You were the one who had difficulty refraining from engaging in romantic or sexual activities with someone other than your partner without their knowledge or consent

Gaslighting: Manipulative behavior aimed at making the victim doubt their own perceptions, memories, and sanity, often leading to confusion and self-doubt

Manipulation: Using deceitful or indirect tactics to influence or control one's partner's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors for personal gain

Emotional Abuse: A pattern of behavior intended to control, demean, or manipulate another person by undermining their self-worth and their emotional well-being.

Emotional Neglect: Ignoring or dismissing partner's emotional needs. It may involve refusing to communicate or engage in discussions with one's partner, shutting down emotionally especially during disagreement.

Invalidation: Dismissing, ignoring, or belittling one's partner's thoughts, feelings, or experiences, denying their validity and undermining their sense of self-worth

Withholding Affection: Intentionally withholding love, intimacy, or emotional support from one's partner as a means of control or punishment

Verbal Abuse: Specifically using words to degrade, humiliate, or intimidate one's partner, often resulting in emotional pain and damage to self-esteem

Physical Intimidation and Abuse: Inflicting physical harm on one's partner or attempting to control one's partner by threatening or displaying direct or indirect aggression or violence

Financial Control: Exerting power over one's partner by controlling their access to money or financial resources, limiting their independence and autonomy

Jealousy: An unhealthy obsession with perceived threats to a relationship, characterized by controlling behaviors, constant suspicion, interrogating, spying, or stalking or other boundary violations.

Isolation: Restricting one's partner's social interactions, friendships, or activities, isolating them from sources of support and connection outside the relationship

Blame-Shifting: Avoiding responsibility for one's actions by shifting the blame onto their partner, refusing to take accountability for their behavior

Narcissism: Having an inflated sense of self-importance, entitlement, and a lack of empathy, often resulting in selfish and manipulative behavior in relationships. Extreme self-centeredness

Emotional Terrorism: The use of fear, manipulation, and intimidation to control or dominate another person, often by exploiting their emotional vulnerabilities to cause distress and maintain power. (Ex: threatening to neglect children, bills, work, or responsibilities, or to cheat, just to control and hurt you)



The Relationship Blueprint: 21+ Qualities for a Thriving and Healthy Connection

- Honest and Open Communication:** Open and honest dialogue fosters understanding and connection.
- Loyalty and Trust:** Faithfully relying on each other creates a sense of safety and security.
- Respect:** Valuing each other's opinions, boundaries, and autonomy.
- Empathy:** Understanding and sharing the feelings of others promotes emotional closeness.
- Support:** Being there for each other through both good times and challenges.
- Compromise:** Finding middle ground and accommodating each other's needs.
- Affection:** Demonstrating love through sensitive and caring gestures, words, and actions.
- Humor:** Sharing laughter and enjoyment strengthens emotional bonds.
- Patience:** Being understanding and tolerant during difficult situations or conflicts.
- Forgiveness:** Letting go of resentment and moving forward from mistakes or conflicts.
- Cooperation:** Working together harmoniously toward common goals
- Responsibility:** Being accountable for one's actions and contributions to the relationship
- Authenticity:** Being genuine and true to oneself fosters deeper connections.
- Flexibility:** Being adaptable and open to change promotes harmony in relationships.
- Shared Values:** Having similar beliefs and goals strengthens compatibility.
- Gratitude:** Expressing appreciation for each other cultivates positivity.
- Commitment:** Dedication to nurturing and sustaining the relationship through ups and downs.
- Boundaries:** Maintaining personal and emotional boundaries to maintain individuality and respect.
- Encouragement:** Supporting each other's growth and individuality especially in overcoming challenges.
- Intimacy:** A deep emotional connection and closeness, in a trusting and secure environment.
- Love:** Deep affection and care for one another that forms the foundation of the relationship.
- Other?
- Other?
- Other?
- Other?



Closing the Session:

- Positive takeaways:
 - Areas of strength for me....
 - I need to work on...
 - Might I need more counseling (such as a couple or family session)?
 - Something that stands out to me in today's discussion that I will take away and think about...

- Final check-in. How is everyone feeling after this discussion?