



# The Difference Between Helpful & Hurtful Behaviors in Relationships

## Trust

### Helpful

It's **helpful** when we support each other's decisions and friendships.

### Hurtful

It's **hurtful** when one or both of us act like the other person isn't good at making decisions or choosing friends.

## Disagreement

### Helpful

It's **helpful** when we both can communicate our frustration, hurt or perspectives in a way that doesn't belittle the other.

### Hurtful

It's **hurtful** when one or both of us make a habit of downplaying, physically harming or using anger to end an argument.

## Communication

### Helpful

It's **helpful** when we both can talk openly about our feelings, preferences, needs and hopes.

### Hurtful

It's **hurtful** when one or both of us consistently disrespects, ignores or demeans the other person's ideas and feelings.

Updated 12/2025

Contact OVA if you're concerned about hurtful behaviors in your relationship or that of a loved one's.

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A large, multi-story brick building with a red-tiled roof and a central portico with columns, surrounded by green trees and a lawn.

# Relationship Behaviors that Impact Building Trust

## Helpful

We can choose to share intimate details about ourselves and know that the other person will respect our vulnerability.

Solo time and spending time with other friends are seen as valuable and important in helping each of us be the best we can be!

We share our phone or location with each other only when it is something we both feel good about. Information is used to keep each other safe.

## Hurtful

One or both of us uses the other person's deeply personal thoughts and feelings to hurt or manipulate.

One or both of us expresses jealousy or hypervigilance when the other person talks to or spends time with friends, family, classmates or others.

One or both of us violates the other person's privacy by tracking location or snooping on the other person's phone. Information is used to control, limit or frighten the other.

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# Relationship Behaviors During Disagreements

## Helpful

We both do our best to listen and try to see the other person's perspective.

We assume the best in each other. We realize that everyone has flaws, and we don't use those to put each other down.

When conflict is about something we both need to agree on, we try to find realistic solutions that meet both of our needs.

Most of our disagreements can be resolved without a fight.

## Hurtful

One or both of us regularly gets agitated, angry, or volatile towards the other person's perspective.

Because of a disagreement, one or both of us acts like the other is simply a bad person. Demeaning name-calling and put downs are used.

When conflict is about something we both need to agree on, one or both of us rarely compromises nor considers the other's best interest.

One or both of us tries to control or manipulate the other person's feelings, needs or perspective.

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# Relationship Behaviors that Impact Communication

## Helpful

We can talk openly and honestly about our hopes, wants and dreams. Our worries are taken seriously. We are genuinely interested in the other person, what they think, and how they feel.

Most of the time, when either one of us makes a mistake or hurts the other person's feelings - we can acknowledge what happened and genuinely repair the situation.

We respect each other's privacy, limits and property. When feeling insecure, we seek out connection instead of control.

## Hurtful

One or both of us regularly ignores, dismisses, makes fun of or doesn't care about what the other person has to say. Certain topics may be off-limits.

There are lots of times where it seems like one or both of us hurts the other person's feelings intentionally. Apologies don't generally lead to changed behavior.

One of us has threatened to or actually taken away the other person's laptop or phone, made it difficult to talk to other people, or constantly tracks texts and DMs.

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