How Can You Know if the Other Person’s Behavior is Wrong?

It can be difficult to know when the ex-boyfriend’s or ex-girlfriend’s behavior stops being a reasonable attempt to get back together with your friend and starts to be inappropriate or wrong. Some guidelines are:

- If your friend has told someone to stop something (like calling at night), then he or she should stop.
- Actions that are inappropriate under any circumstance (like calling at 3am) are wrong.
- Actions that are frightening are wrong—no one has the right to frighten your friend.
- Any type of threat toward your friend, you, or your friend’s family is wrong.

This Type of Inappropriate Behavior is a Form of Harassment

- If your friend is being harassed, it is not his or her fault. It is not because of something he or she did or did not do. It is the other person’s responsibility.
- By taking the right actions, you can support your friend and can help your friend get the help that he or she needs to end this harassment.

Approaching Your Friend

High school students who have had these experiences say that support and guidance from parents and friends have been helpful. Many students do not know what to do when they are being harassed. Many of them fear being judged or blamed for the harassment.

If you know that your friend is being harassed, it is important to approach him or her with support and concern.

- Do not blame your friend for starting or ending the relationship. The best thing you can do is listen and be supportive. Make suggestions and provide guidance without passing judgment.
- Try not to criticize the ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend. Your friend may still care about him or her.
- Let your friend know that the harassment is unacceptable and that it is not his or her fault.
- Let your friend know about your concern.
- Suggest that your friend talk with his or her parents, a teacher or counselor, or another adult who might be able to help. Offer to go with your friend to be supportive, but do not insist on going along.
- It is important to consider your friend’s. However, there may be times when you decide that you need to tell someone what is happening even if your friend does not want you to. Before you do this, consult with your parents, a counselor, teacher, or other adult for advice.

Helping Your Friend Avoid Contact With His or Her Ex-boyfriend or Ex-girlfriend

You can take actions to help keep your friend safe and minimize the harassment that he or she is experiencing.

- If you know that no one else will be home at your friend’s house after school, invite him or her to come home with you.
- If you have a car, try to be accommodating and give your friend rides so that he or she can avoid traveling alone.
- If you are taking your friend home, wait until he or she gets into the house before driving away.
- When at a party, school activity, or other social event, be prepared to leave with your friend if he or she becomes uncomfortable.

Maybe You Are Also a Friend of the Other Person

- Try not to get caught between your friend and the ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend. It may be alright to continue being friends with both of them, but avoid giving each of them news about the other.
- It is very important to avoid being a messenger between your friend and the ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend. If you do this, the harassment that your friend is experiencing is likely to last longer.
- You may need to set clear guidelines with both of them about what you will do and what you will not do (such as spy on the other person or carry messages back and forth). You should stick to these guidelines, even though it may be hard to do so.
It's a Team Effort

- It is best to deal with this type of situation as a team. Your friend might want to handle it alone because of embarrassment or being unsure what to do, but keeping other people out of it can be a problem. Many people can provide useful information on handling the situation. Help your friend decide who else to talk with and give your friend support.

Talking With Your Parents

- Your parents may be able to give useful guidance. They may be aware of ways in which similar situations were ended successfully and they might have good advice on how your friend can talk with his or her parents. They can support you while you support your friend.

Talking With a Counselor

- Counselors are specially trained to listen and give you or your friend support. Sometimes it is easier to talk to a counselor than a friend or parent. Counselors can also refer you to other people, services, and information that may be helpful.

Information on the Web

We have more information about how to handle these situations on our website:
- http://www.humec.cornell.edu/stalking

Others Can Help Also...

- perhaps a teacher, member of the clergy, coach, or neighbor.

Who To Contact For Help

At school:
Contact a counselor or teacher you know well, or call the counseling office and you will be referred to a counselor who can help.

In your community:
There may be one or more agencies in your community that deal with problems related to relationships or dating violence. There is a listing of community agencies at the beginning or end of many phone books.

At a Police or Sheriff's Department:
Many departments have one or two officers or deputies who are specially trained to deal with these issues.

Information in this brochure is from these sources:
http://www.humec.cornell.edu/stalking

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Is your friend being bothered by an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend who

JUST WON'T LET GO?

Is the ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend doing things like

- phoning repeatedly or at inappropriate times,
- visiting when asked to stay away,
- watching from outside your friend's house or apartment,
- following your friend,
- making threats?

By doing the right things, you can support and help your friend with this difficult experience.