



Elephant in The Room Q & A

Brownsville High School (DVSSP)
January 2022

****This document can also be accessed at www.bloom365.org/faqs**

Resources:

For additional resources, please visit bloom365.org/resources

BLOOM365 Peer Support Helpline	For free, confidential support: Text/Call: 1-888-606-HOPE (4673) Monday-Friday from 3PM-9PM (MST) To reach a specific advocate directly, please feel free to contact our Helpline and tell us who you would like to speak to.
Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA (DVSSP)	24/7 Hotline www.peacefromdv.org/hotline WASHINGTON COUNTY: 800-791-4000 or 724-223-9190 GREENE COUNTY: 724-852-2463 FAYETTE COUNTY: 724-439-9500
Teen Lifeline	Text or call 602-248-TEEN (8336) for free, confidential support 24/7 relating to suicide, depression, bullying, or relationships.
National Teen Dating Violence Hotline	Text "LOVEIS" to 22522 24/7
National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
National Sexual Assault Hotline	1-800.656.HOPE (4673)
Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)

***Content Warning:** For some, Elephant in the Room Cards are places where they might disclose trauma, violence, or harm. We encourage you to proceed with caution if you have experienced power-based violence or abuse of any kind. If you need support, you can reach out to the Hotlines listed above.

Q: Student

A: BLOOM365 Advocate

Q: How do you walk away from someone you know is toxic for you, but don't want to hurt? It's not abusive but it definitely could get to that point

A: Thank you for reaching out, this is certainly an important question to ask. We understand that it can be hard to leave any type of relationship. "I statements" are awesome for ending a relationship because they can help you explain why you are choosing to end the relationship without directly placing blame on the other person. For example, you could say "I don't feel like I have enough time to commit to our relationship, so I think it would be best for both of us if we are just friends." Or "I feel like I am not able to give you what you want in a relationship. I think we should go our separate ways." This can apply to all types of relationships!

You can end a relationship in a way that makes you feel comfortable. If you feel like the situation could become dangerous or even just too uncomfortable for you, you can do a couple of things: you can make a safety plan to start with, you can have that conversation in a relatively public space like a park, and of course you could always have someone you trust nearby for emotional and safety support for during and after. These types of situations can be difficult for a lot of people. We encourage you to explore the coping strategies we discussed during Doses and find one that best suits you. This could be spending more time with friends, or dedicating time to a new hobby or skill. If you have any questions or need to talk to someone, we encourage you to reach out to [DVSSP's 24/7 Hotline](#), or the BLOOM365 HelpLine listed at the numbers above.

Q: If I feel that my partner might hurt themselves if I ask for space, how would I go about it?

A: Thank you for reaching out to ask this very common and important question. You have the right to set boundaries and to take space, and it is not your fault if someone else self-harms. However, when anyone makes threats or actually follows through with hurting themselves or others, it is very important to take these threats and actions seriously. Someone threatening to kill or harm you or themselves if you end the relationship or take a break is one of the [Top 5 Red Flags](#) that increases your risk of being seriously hurt or even killed. When setting boundaries, it might be helpful to utilize "I statements" because they can help you explain why you are choosing to take space without directly placing blame on the other person. For example, you could say "I don't feel like I have enough time to commit to our relationship, so I think it would be best for both of us to take some space" Or "I feel like I need some time to clear my mind." It might be helpful to create a safety plan before having that conversation so that you're prepared with information, resources and support going into it—a BLOOM365 advocate can assist you with this, if you'd like! If you feel comfortable and safe doing so, you could also share the contact information for Teen LifeLine, they can be reached by text or by calling 602-248-TEEN (8336) for free, confidential support 24/7 relating to suicide, depression, bullying, or relationships. In a situation where someone is

threatening to or has already hurt themselves or someone else, the best thing to do is call 911. We encourage you to talk to a trusted adult such as a school counselor or social worker, a parent or teacher, or a BLOOM365 advocate for additional support. You can reach the [DVSSP Hotline 24/7](#) for additional support, as well as the BLOOM365 HelpLine at the numbers listed above.

Q: I was in a toxic relationship recently and I thought that I couldn't get out of it but I got the courage! I didn't see the red flags bc I didn't know them and I was in that for 6 months. After I got out I started to talk to a guy who loves me for me he makes sure that I make it to school he gets me out of the house. But we didn't start talking to date yet we are just getting to know each other I just feel guilty because we just broke up 2 months ago and I don't want to hurt him but I am happy!

A: Thank you for sharing your experience with us! We are so happy to hear that you were able to safely leave that toxic relationship. It can often be difficult to recognize the red flags of abuse in our own relationships, and sometimes it takes something like a conversation with a friend or going through the 7 Doses to identify and recognize those signs of abuse. It's so awesome to hear that once you had the knowledge you needed, you were empowered to make a decision that felt best for you. It is normal to have a lot of different emotions after ending a relationship. If you ever want to talk more about those feelings, our bloom365 advocates would be more than happy to help you! Feel free to reach out to us by phone/text at 1-888-606-HOPE (4673) or by online chat at bloom365.org, Monday through Friday from 3PM-9PM (MST). You can also reach out to [DVSSP's 24/7 Hotline](#) for additional support and resources by calling **the corresponding county's Hotline number listed above.**

Q: What's a way to move on from a really toxic relationship? How can I let go so I can grow?

A: We want you to know that you are not alone, and we are glad that you reached out for support. Moving on from a toxic relationship can be a difficult thing to do. While ending a close relationship can be tough, it can be a great time for self-evaluation and growth. Finding ways to cope can be really helpful. For example: Spending time with the people you love, writing in a journal, yoga, joining a new sports team or club, or simply going for a walk. Giving yourself time to process feelings and emotions is important. It's also important to be kind to yourself and to be patient, and give yourself time for your heart to heal. We all cope with things in different ways and at different speeds. Find what works for you, and always know BLOOM365 is here to support you if needed! If you're still struggling with coping, you can always reach out to a DVSSP or BLOOM365 Advocate at the numbers above for free, confidential support and a listening ear.

Q: How do you cut off someone you've been friends with for a long time after they start getting toxic and becoming mean and rude?

A: Thank you for reaching out and asking this question. Ending friendships can be a hard experience. Losing a long-time friend can be painful, and while it can be a tough thing to do, it can also be a great time for self-evaluation and growth. You can choose to end a friendship in a way that feels comfortable to you. One tool that could be helpful is using open and healthy communication. "I statements" are an awesome way to communicate openly, as they can help you explain why you are choosing to end the relationship without placing blame on the other person. An example of an "I" statement would be saying something like, "I feel that this friendship is getting toxic and I think it's best we go our separate ways."

Communication is an important tool we can use to help end a relationship on good terms. By communicating our desires and reasoning for wanting to end a relationship, we can give each other closure to move on and hopefully grow from our experience. Ending relationships of any kind, especially close, long-time friendships, can be a difficult experience to navigate. We encourage you to explore coping strategies, such as journaling or finding a new skill or hobby, and find what works best for you. For additional support, we encourage you to reach out to [DVSSP's 24/7 Hotline](#) by calling the corresponding county's Hotline number listed above. You can also reach out to a BLOOM365 Advocate on our Helpline by phone/text at 1-888-606-HOPE (4673) or by online chat at bloom365.org - Monday through Friday from 3PM-9PM (MST). We are here for you!

Q: So I had a friend + they told me they were scared of their ex-boyfriend but went and dated them again now we don't talk because I didn't support them.... I just didn't support the fact she told me so much bad things + still went back....

A: Thank you for sharing your experience with us. We understand it can be difficult to see our friends or family in abusive relationships, and it sounds like you really care about your friend and her wellbeing. It's also important that we don't blame the victim in these situations. It can be helpful to try to understand the barriers to leaving an abusive relationship (fear, love, dependency, and insecurity). Think of these barriers as hooks. It's not easy to un-hook them all at once, and it can be difficult to leave any relationship, especially one that is abusive and could potentially become dangerous. You have the right to set boundaries within your relationships, and we understand you and this friend don't talk now because you didn't support their relationship. If you feel concerned for your friend and you decide to try talking to her again, it can be helpful to reference BLOOM365's "[5 Ways to Help a Friend Going Through Dating Abuse](#)" resource to start the conversation on why you are concerned. You can also tear out the extra [red flag checklist](#) in your workbook and talk to your friend about why you are concerned. Sometimes it takes more than one conversation to really get through to someone who is experiencing abuse. If you would like to talk about this with an advocate, feel free to reach out to the DVSSP or BLOOM365 numbers listed above.

Q: What to do when you really like someone, but past experiences from others make you anxious?

A: Thank you for reaching out and asking this question. It is common to feel anxious about new feelings or experiences, especially after we've had challenging or painful experiences in the past. Sometimes it can be helpful to process those anxious feelings and find ways to cope with them. This can look like journaling, talking with those you trust about what you're feeling, starting a new hobby or skill, or going for a nice walk. Giving yourself time to process feelings and emotions is important. It's also important to be kind to yourself, and to be patient and give yourself time for your heart to heal. We all cope with things in different ways and at different speeds. Find what works for you, and always know BLOOM365 is here to support you if needed! You can find us by phone/text at 1-888-606-HOPE (4673) or by online chat at bloom365.org - Monday through Friday from 3PM-9PM (MST). You can also reach out to [DVSSP's 24/7 Hotline](#) for additional support and resources. We are here for you!

Q: How to unlearn toxic habits parents taught you?

A: We want you to know that you are not alone, and we are glad that you reached out for support. Unlearning toxic habits can be challenging and can take some time to do. But, knowing that you want to

unlearn these toxic habits is the first step toward making a lasting change. It can be helpful to identify which toxic habits or behaviors we want to focus on, and make a note of when they come up and how we normally handle them. From there, we can focus on how we want to handle them in a more positive, blooming way going forward. This might look different for each person and each situation. We encourage you to reach out to a DVSSP or BLOOM365 Advocate or another trusted adult if you find that you could use support unlearning toxic habits and learning healthier, more positive ways to replace those habits. We encourage you to take care of yourself when unlearning these habits. Remind yourself that mistakes are lessons, and try to view them as learning opportunities. Remember that nobody is perfect, and that everyone excels at different things. Focus on what you're good at, what makes you unique and cheer others on for their success. Try new things, set goals. Take care of yourself by exercising, eating well, and sleeping properly. Please know that our advocates are available to talk, and we'd be happy to meet or talk with you if you need support.

Q: Honestly I know not everything goes our way but why does life have to be so hard sometimes? Like I'm convinced that I don't deserve happiness & it sucks

A: Thank you for being so honest and brave to ask that question. It sounds like you're having some overwhelming feelings coming up, and we want you to know that we are glad you reached out for support. You deserve to be happy and cared for. We encourage you to try defining happiness for yourself - whatever it looks like for you. This could be something like writing down 3 things you're grateful for each night/morning, or setting time each day/week to spend time with friends or family or doing something that makes you feel more uplifted. When things do not go our way, it may impact our self-esteem. We encourage you to take a moment to remember the things you love about yourself (your strengths, aspirations, personality, physical characteristics, etc.). Writing these things down and having them easily accessible can help build your confidence. Doing your own daily affirmation and spending time doing the things that make you happy can be helpful tools in building up our self-esteem, also. If you want to talk more about how you're feeling or anything else on your mind, we encourage you to reach out to a DVSSP or BLOOM365 Advocate for support. You are not alone, and you don't have to deal with these thoughts and feelings by yourself. We are here for you!

Q: I was in a relationship that made me think that some things are normal. I am now in a new relationship and I am now realizing that how I was being treated was toxic. Now sometimes I have an overflow of emotion and shut down. I don't know why I get like this but I want to know if that is normal and if it will go away.

A: Thank you for reaching out and sharing your experience with us. We are sorry that you experienced a toxic relationship, and we are glad to hear that you were able to end and move on from it. It's normal to still have overflows of emotion after experiencing abuse or a toxic relationship. It might be helpful to engage in self-care activities, such as spending time with people you love and people that make you happy, spending time in nature, or writing down your thoughts and feelings in a journal or something similar. It can also be helpful to talk through those emotions either with someone that you trust or even with a professional, such as a trauma counselor or therapist if those options are available for you. To discuss additional ways to cope or to find resources nearby, feel free to contact the DVSSP 24/7 Hotlines or a BLOOM365 Advocate at the numbers listed above. We are here for you!

Q: Thank you for coming to our school you helped us all we love you & we thank you!

A: Thank you for such kind feedback! We really appreciate it! :)

Q: I recently started getting involved with a guy. He expects me to drop a friend that has been very dear to me for years. What is an approach I can take on this situation?

A: Thank you for reaching out about this question! There are many different approaches you could take to navigate this situation. Ultimately, what you decide to do is your choice to make. One approach that could be helpful in this situation is to take some time to think about your personal deal-breakers and deal-makers. Taking some time to think about what you want in relationships with others can help you figure out which problems are ones you could work through and which ones will make you reconsider being in those relationships.

Another approach that could be helpful if this is a situation that you want to work through is to have an honest conversation with this new person about how you feel about their request. Using “I” statements can be very useful in having healthy communication with others. This could be saying something like, “I feel uncomfortable when you ask me to end my close friendship(s). Can we discuss an alternative/compromise?” This style of conflict resolution allows for you to take ownership of your own feelings, allowing the other person to understand your perspective of the situation without feeling directly attacked. This prevents them from feeling like they need to defend themselves and can allow for more effective communication. To discuss additional approaches you can take or any other questions you might have, feel free to reach out to a DVSSP or BLOOM365 Advocate at the numbers listed above. We are here for you!

Q: I have a friend who only talks to me when they want something or want to correct me when they think I’m wrong even though they don’t know the whole thing. I know it’s toxic but I’m scared to say something because of what they’ve been through and because I’ve known them for a long time. Do you have any suggestions on how to say something or leave the friendship without causing a huge mess? I feel I would also lose other friends in the process if we stopped being friends because they have such a big impact on other people’s friendships and how they view people.

A: This sounds like a tough situation, and we are glad that you reached out for support. If you are not receiving the type of friendship that you would like, you can think about whether or not this is a friendship you want to be in. It can be useful to look at the blooming and wilting flowers to help you determine whether this friendship is healthy or unhealthy. If the friendship is built off of power & control and we are not able to make changes by communicating in a healthy way with our friend using “I statements,” we may consider whether this friendship is one that we want to continue.

It could be helpful to reach out to your friend and ask if they are open to talking to you about how you’ve been feeling. If they are open to talking with you, using “I” statements is a good tool for addressing conflict in a healthy and productive way. This can look like saying something like, “I feel sad when you don’t check in on how I’m doing. Can we talk about what’s been going on?” rather than saying something like, “Why do you only talk to me when you need something?”

This style of conflict resolution allows for you to take ownership of your own feelings, allowing the other person to understand your perspective of the situation without feeling directly attacked. This

prevents them from feeling like they need to defend themselves and can allow for more effective communication. Navigating conflict with our friends can be hard; if you'd like to talk more about this, our advocates are here to support you. Feel free to reach out to DVSSP or BLOOM365 Advocate at the numbers above for additional support!