

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS, SAY THAT

IF YOUR FRIEND IS DATING SOMEONE NEW...

When we tell our friends that their relationship is “perfect,” or that they are “so cute together,” they are more likely to ignore negative things that happen and blow them off as not a big deal. They also will be less likely to share details of their relationship with you that aren’t perfect because they don’t want to let you down, burden you, or feel like they need to live up to your expectations. So...

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS	SAY THAT
“They’re SO great! You guys are perfect together.”	“You seem really happy! How are you feeling about them?”
“Why do you keep ditching us for them?”	“It seems like you’re spending a lot of time with them. How’s everything going?”
“OMG you guys are fi-nal-ly together. We’ve all been waiting for this!”	“We thought you liked them for a while. How do you feel now that it’s official?”
“Ew, why would you date them?”	“What is it about them that you like?”

ON SOCIAL MEDIA...

There is already incredible pressure to be in a seemingly perfect relationship, and social media only accentuates this pressure. Remember as a friend that even if you are seeing the happiest posts on social media, that is not the only representation of your friend’s relationship. So as a friend, continue to ask genuine questions about how the relationship is going and do not assume that because it looks great on social media that everything is perfect. So...

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS	SAY THAT
When’s the wedding?	You seem so happy! Catch up soon?
#relationshipgoals/Couple of the Year/Favs	So cute!
Jealous - ur so lucky/I want your life/Where do I get one?	Always wanted to visit there - can’t wait to hear about it!
Hi Mom & Dad	Love this/Love you both!

IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT A FRIEND...

Though it may be true, it's important not to label your friend's partner as abusive, as that will likely cause your friend to shut down. To help them open up to you, talk about the specific behaviors you've seen and ask your friend how those behaviors make them *feel*. By focusing on unhealthy *behaviors* rather than the *people* exhibiting those behaviors, the conversation will feel less judgmental and more about the genuine care you have for your friend. If your friend is the person you care about, your conversation should focus on that friend, not their abusive partner. So...

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS	SAY THAT
"We never see you anymore, you're always with them. Are we even friends?"	"I've noticed they always show up unexpectedly. How do you feel about that?"
"Where have you been? Hanging out with ___ again?"	"I've missed you at practice. Is there a reason you haven't been here?"
"Why are you still with them? They treat you like crap."	"I'm your friend first and here if you need to talk."
"Stop answering that. Just tell them you're busy."	"I've noticed you're always on your phone. Is there anything going on that you want to talk about?"
"I'm done. You're not dragging me through this anymore."	"You seem really stressed out lately. What's been going on?"
"Why do you always listen to everything they say? I don't get it."	"They seem to get mad when you hang out with us/__. What's your gut reaction to that?"

IF YOUR FRIEND GETS DEFENSIVE...

If you know that your friend is in an unhealthy relationship but they don't see it, it's okay to be angry at the situation, but getting angry at them won't solve that problem. Your friend will never leave a relationship because you tell them to; they will leave a relationship when they make the decision for themselves and feel ready. In order to help your friend be honest with themselves, be patient yet persistent and offer gentle, steadfast support – be an example of healthy behaviors! So...

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS	SAY THAT
"I was only trying to help you - sorry I won't make an effort anymore."	"Just checking in - I'm here if you ever want to talk about it."

"This is the last time I'm trying. I'm sick of putting up with them."	"There's no time limit on when you can come to me to talk."
"Fine. Don't tell me I didn't warn you about them."	"Let's go to lunch this week. I promise I won't pester you about your relationship during it."
"I know you like them, but they're such a jerk. How do you not see that?"	"I'm sorry if I came across as intrusive. I was truly worried for your safety and just really wanted to check in. I won't bring it up again unless you feel ready to talk."
"You guys got in a fight agaaain?"	"Do you want to talk about what happened last night?"
"Wait, I thought you all broke up. What are they doing here?"	"What made you change your mind?"

IF YOU SEE A FRIEND DOING SOMETHING UNHEALTHY...

If you see your friend exhibiting unhealthy behaviors, you can help them recognize that their behavior is not okay without saying that they're a bad or abusive person. Starting with gentle questions to learn more about your friend's relationship is key. Someone exhibiting these behaviors is unlikely to respond well to being told that they are an abuser, but genuinely showing that you care about them might get them to accept help faster. If you can get your friend to admit that they are "stressed," due to the relationship or to anything else, offer to go with them to a counselor and help normalize mental health treatment. So...

INSTEAD OF SAYING THIS	SAY THAT
Ignore it.	"You seem really angry/stressed. Anything you want to talk about?"
Take a video/Snapchat it/egg them on	"You and ___ seem to be fighting a lot lately. How are you feeling about them?"
"You've got them whipped!"	"Why do you feel like you need to know where they are all the time?/Do they always know where you are too?"
Laugh	How do you think they felt when you said that?

If you find that these conversations are not going in the direction you hoped, here are additional action items to consider --

- Talk to another friend about what you've seen and ask if they've noticed anything
- Talk to a trusted adult - parent, coach, counselor, teacher
- Connect with [local or national resources](#) in real time