

## Do You Avoid Hurtful Thoughts and Behaviors?



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*Content on this side is intended for the educator's reference. The information on the back can be photocopied and shared with clients.*

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**Objective:** Clients will become more aware of thoughts and behaviors that can help or harm their relationship.

**Audience:** This tool can be used with single clients or couples at any stage in their relationship.

**Estimated Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Educator Instructions:** Review the instructions on the tool. Talk about the lists of behaviors that can help a relationship and those that can be harmful to a relationship. Have the client mark the appropriate box indicating those he/she does well and those he/she needs to work on. Next, talk about some ground rules that might help the client avoid hurtful thoughts and behaviors. Encourage couples to talk about each other's expectations and reach compromises that make both partners comfortable. When working with single clients, use this tool to help them think about what they want in a relationship and from a future partner. Have them consider past relationships and reflect on what went well, what went badly/poorly, and what they would do again or differently.

**Discussion Starter:** In couple relationships, sometimes people think or say things that are hurtful. Sometimes this is done on purpose; other times, it might be a misunderstanding. Either way, how the other person views your actions can hurt your relationship. Talking about expectations and putting some ground rules in place can help partners be more aware of how their behaviors affect the relationship. What are some things you say or do that could hurt your relationship? What are some ground rules that could help your relationship?

**Follow-up:** In future conversations, talk about changes they have made to strengthen their relationship. If they mention that some rules have been difficult to live by, talk about those challenges and the types of changes they might need to make so the rules are easier to follow. Ask if new ground rules have been discussed.



HEALTHY  
RELATIONSHIP  
& MARRIAGE  
EDUCATION  
TRAINING

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## Do You Avoid Hurtful Thoughts and Behaviors?



What we choose to think or say about our partner can help or harm the relationship. People often have rules or expectations about their relationship. Some of these “ground rules” include how partners treat each other, how they discuss problems, and the types of information that should or should not be shared with others. Below are some things that couples do that can help or hurt a relationship. What do you do? What do you feel that you could work on, do more or less of, or do better?

<b>Things that Help a Relationship</b>	<b>I Do</b>	<b>I Need to Work On</b>
I listen to my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I make time for my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I make efforts to keep my family from coming between us	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I keep promises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I make efforts to be open and not keep secrets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think about my partner's positive qualities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I remember things that are important to my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try to understand my partner's point of view	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I thank my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Things that Hurt a Relationship</b>	<b>I Don't</b>	<b>I Need to Work On</b>
I yell and shout at my partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I say things to make my partner feel bad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tell friends about problems in my relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I sometimes flirt with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often compare my partner to other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think about all the ways I want my partner to change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I put down my partner's ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I cut my partner off when talking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I walk away from my partner during disagreements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you doing more things that help (not hurt) your relationship? If so, great!

If there are things you feel you can work on, what steps can you take to improve? Perhaps there are some new ground rules that you could create for your relationship to avoid hurtful thoughts and behaviors. Choose one or two things above to work on, or decide on something else to do, or stop doing, that will help strengthen your relationship.

***Choosing to think and act in positive ways and avoiding hurtful thoughts and behaviors will strengthen your relationship.***