



onelove

Facts About Digital Abuse You Need to Know

6 Tech Tips for a Healthy Relationship

Has anyone ever texted you repeatedly because you didn't reply to them quickly enough? Have you ever received sexually explicit photos (a.k.a. nudes or DP's) without asking for them? Or maybe someone has demanded your passcode or access to your phone and social media. These behaviors are not okay and actually qualify as digital abuse.

Digital abuse is very common. In fact, 1 in 4 dating teens are harassed through technology.¹ Digital abuse can come from anyone – a dating partner, a friend, or an acquaintance. In a world where we are constantly surrounded by technology, it's important to understand the various forms of abuse that can take place both online and off.



1. Have a discussion about comfort levels.

People have different comfort levels regarding how often they like to stay in touch. Talk to your partner about what you are both comfortable or not comfortable with when it comes to texting and social media. In a healthy relationship, your partner will be considerate of your feelings and the contact level will feel mutual, whereas in an unhealthy relationship, your partner may be more demanding and neglect your feelings or comfort level on this subject.



2. Find a happy medium together.

If two people want to text all day err day — and they are both enjoying it — then great! It becomes unhealthy if two people don't talk about healthy boundaries, or if one person assumes that they can text all the time regardless of what the other person wants. In a healthy relationship, both people care equally about the other's comfort level. There should be mutual agreement about how often you communicate.



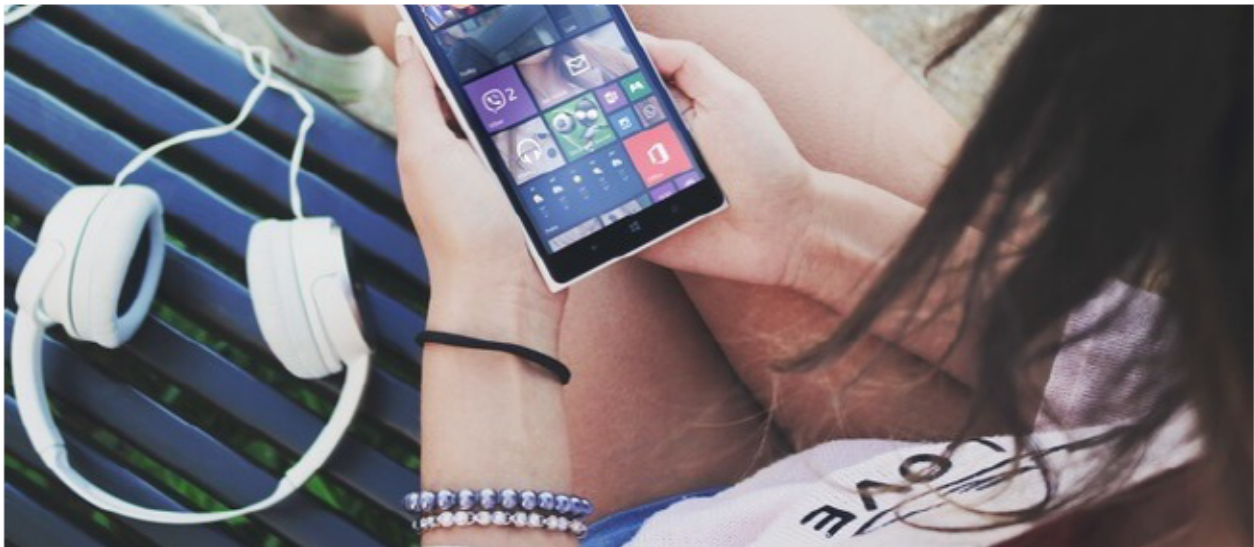
3. Information on your whereabouts is not “owed.”

If you feel that someone is demanding to know your whereabouts, doesn't want you to go certain places, or implies that you “owe” them information about what you are doing or why, those are signs of an unhealthy, abusive relationship. In healthy relationships, people feel free and unpressured and don't need to report to their partner.



4. Healthy relationships have boundaries.

Just because you might be in a relationship with someone, it doesn't give them the right to go through your phone or know what you are doing every minute of the day. Going through your partner's phone or social media without their permission is unhealthy and abusive behavior. In a healthy relationship, you and your partner will mutually trust one another and respect personal boundaries.



5. The internet is forever.

If someone asks you for nudes or sexual photos of yourself, don't feel obligated to share them. Even if you trust your partner or know that they will delete the pictures immediately, this is still not a safe thing

to do because once a picture is taken, it never truly disappears – even on Snapchat! Sharing photos like this can create an unhealthy power imbalance in your relationship. Once someone has explicit photos of you, they can use them as leverage or blackmail to control you. Additionally, in LGBTQ relationships, these photos could be used as blackmail to out a person.



6. Guilt-tripping isn't good.

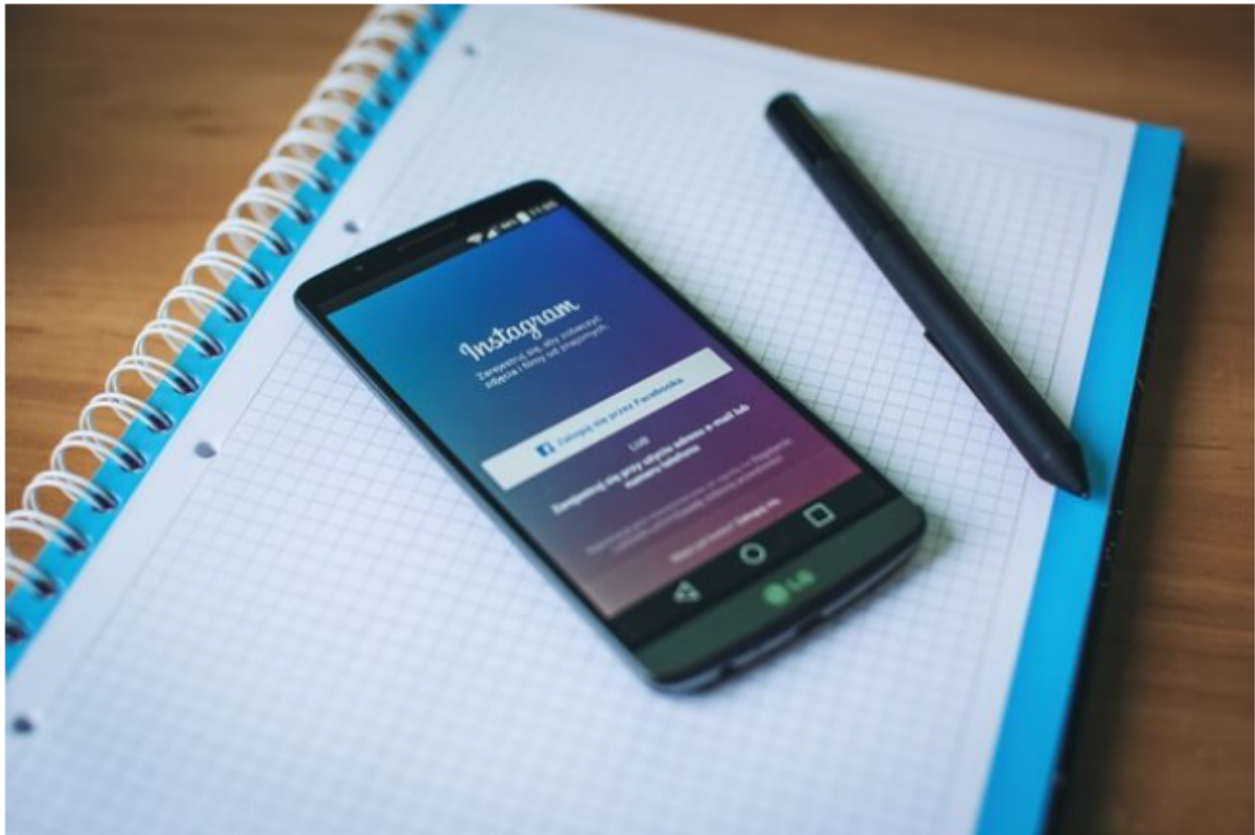
If your partner is making you feel guilty about not handing over your passcode, not giving them sexual photos or any other sort of thing that you are not comfortable with, then they lack respect for your decisions and are not a good person to date. Repeatedly asking and guilt-tripping someone to do anything that they are not comfortable with is abuse. In a healthy relationship, your partner will never try to convince you or pressure you into doing something that you are not completely comfortable with.



Behaviors of Digital Abuse

Abuse online has many of the same behaviors as abuse offline. Digital abuse is...

- Coercive. When someone pressures or harasses you to do things that you are not comfortable doing, including sexual acts or favors.
- Controlling. When someone is dominating and attempts to control or gain power over you.
- Degrading. When someone belittles and devalues you.
- Embarrassing. When someone threatens to share embarrassing information about you, or posts personal or intimate information in public places.



Examples of Digital Abuse

- Using your social media account without permission or demanding access to your phone
- Sending you unwanted sexual photos and messages, or sexting you without you consenting to it first
- Sending you so many messages or liking so many of your photos and posts that it makes you uncomfortable
- Making you feel afraid when you do not respond to calls or texts
- Looking through your phone frequently to check in on your texting and phone call history
- Spreading rumors about you online or through texts
- Creating a profile page about you without your permission
- Posting embarrassing photos or information about you online
- Using information from your online profile to harass you

- Writing nasty things about you on their profile page or anywhere online
- Sending threatening text messages, DMs, or chats
- Pressuring and threatening you to send sexual photos of yourself, or making you feel inferior if you don't comply
- Taking a video of you and sending it to anyone else without your permission
- Telling you who you can or can't be friends with or what posts you can or can't like on social media

¹ Source: For more information on digital abuse, check out www.urban.org/digitizing-abuse-infographic



For more on digital abuse, check out the resources from our partners [Futures Without Violence](#) and [Love is Respect](#).