

# Identifying Red Flags in Your Relationship: A Comprehensive Worksheet

## Introduction

Healthy relationships are built on trust, respect, mutual support, and open communication. However, unhealthy patterns—known as “red flags”—can sometimes emerge, leaving you feeling confused, unsafe, or undermined. This 4-page worksheet helps you identify potential red flags in your relationship, assess their impact, and take steps toward safety and well-being. Red flags can range from subtle behaviors (e.g., gaslighting) to serious issues (e.g., physical abuse), and recognizing them is the first step toward creating a healthier dynamic. You don’t need to address every red flag—just focus on those that resonate with your experience. If you feel unsafe or experience physical abuse, seek help immediately by calling 911, a crisis hotline, or a local support service (see resources at the end). Use this tool personally or with a trusted friend, therapist, or advocate to gain clarity and empowerment.

## Section 1: Understanding Red Flags

### What Are Red Flags?

Red flags are warning signs of unhealthy or potentially abusive behaviors in a relationship. They can indicate a lack of respect, control, or safety, eroding trust and well-being over time. While occasional disagreements are normal, consistent patterns of these behaviors signal deeper issues that may require action. Recognizing red flags empowers you to protect yourself, set boundaries, and seek support if needed.

- **Why It Matters:** Red flags can affect your mental, emotional, and physical health, leading to stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, or fear. Early identification can prevent escalation and help you build safer, healthier relationships.
- **Common Misconceptions:** Not every disagreement is a red flag—focus on patterns, not isolated incidents. Some behaviors may start subtly (e.g., excessive jealousy) but worsen over time.

**Tool:** Use a red flag journal to track behaviors over time, noting dates, descriptions, and how they make you feel. This can help you identify patterns and, if needed, provide evidence for legal or therapeutic support.

## Section 2: Assessing Red Flag Behaviors in Your Relationship

Review the following red flag behaviors and consider whether they’re present in your relationship. For each, rate how often you’ve experienced it (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) and provide a specific example if applicable. If you experience physical abuse, seek help immediately—do not delay.

## Red Flag Behaviors

For each behavior, circle or mark your response (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) and use the reflection prompts to explore further. Leave blank if you prefer not to answer.

- 1. Controlling Behavior: Tries to dictate who you see, what you wear, or how you spend your time.**
  - Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What specific actions or requests feel controlling (e.g., “You can’t wear that dress”)? How does this affect your independence or freedom?
  - **Example:** “My partner insists I only hang out with their friends and gets upset if I plan time with my family.”
- 2. Isolating You: Discourages you from spending time with friends and family.**
  - Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** How do they discourage these connections (e.g., guilt trips, criticism)? Does it make you feel isolated or dependent on them?
  - **Example:** “They say my friends are a bad influence and guilt me into staying home instead of visiting my parents.”
- 3. Disrespecting Boundaries: Reads your messages, checks your phone without permission, or makes unwanted sexual advances.**
  - Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What boundaries are being crossed (e.g., privacy, consent)? How does this affect your trust or safety?
  - **Example:** “They grabbed my phone and scrolled through my texts, accusing me of hiding something.”
- 4. Excessive Jealousy: Accuses you of cheating without reason, or gets upset when you interact with others.**
  - Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What triggers their jealousy (e.g., talking to a coworker)? How does it make you feel (e.g., anxious, defensive)?
  - **Example:** “They accused me of flirting with a cashier, even though I was just being polite.”
- 5. Emotional Abuse: Puts you down, insults you, or uses humiliation as a tactic.**
  - Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What specific comments or actions hurt you (e.g., name-calling, public shaming)? How does this impact your self-esteem?
  - **Example:** “They called me ‘lazy’ in front of friends, making me feel humiliated and worthless.”
- 6. Physical Abuse: Any unwanted physical contact, including hitting, shoving, or grabbing. (Seek help immediately if you experience this)**
  - Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** If this has occurred, what specific incidents stand out? How do you feel (e.g., scared, trapped)? Prioritize safety—call 911, a crisis hotline, or a shelter now.
  - **Example:** “They shoved me against the wall during an argument, leaving me terrified and bruised.”
- 7. Blames You for Everything: Never takes responsibility for their own actions or feelings.**

- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What do they blame you for (e.g., their anger, mistakes)? How does this affect your sense of fairness or guilt?
  - **Example:** “After they broke a promise, they said, ‘You made me forget because you distracted me.’”
8. **Gaslighting: Makes you question your own memory or perception of events.**
- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What specific incidents make you doubt yourself (e.g., “That never happened”)? How does this impact your confidence or reality?
  - **Example:** “They denied yelling at me, even though I have a vivid memory of it, leaving me confused.”
9. **Rages or Yelling: Uses anger to intimidate or control you.**
- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** How do their outbursts affect you (e.g., fear, anxiety)? Do they use anger to get their way?
  - **Example:** “They screamed at me for being 10 minutes late, making me feel terrified and submissive.”
10. **Sudden Intense Affection (Love Bombing): Showers you with excessive attention early on, then withdraws affection later.**
- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What does this pattern look like (e.g., gifts, flattery, then coldness)? How does it confuse or manipulate you?
  - **Example:** “At first, they sent flowers every day, but now they ignore me for days as punishment.”
11. **Financial Control: Takes control of your money or prevents you from having financial independence.**
- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** How do they control your finances (e.g., withholding money, monitoring spending)? How does this affect your autonomy?
  - **Example:** “They won’t let me have my own bank account and criticize every purchase I make.”
12. **Threats or Coercion: Threatens to hurt themselves or someone else if you leave the relationship.**
- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What specific threats have they made (e.g., “I’ll hurt myself if you go”)? How do they make you feel (e.g., trapped, responsible)? Prioritize safety—seek help immediately.
  - **Example:** “They said, ‘If you leave, I’ll take the kids and disappear,’ making me afraid to end things.”
13. **Minimizes or Denies Abuse: Tells you their behavior ‘isn’t that bad’ or tries to explain it away.**
- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What do they say to dismiss their behavior (e.g., “You’re too sensitive”)? How does this affect your ability to address the issue?
  - **Example:** “After yelling at me, they said, ‘I was just stressed—you’re overreacting.’”

14. **Has a History of Violence: Talks about past abusive relationships or has a history of violence with others.**
- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What specific incidents or stories have you heard? How does this make you feel about their potential for violence toward you?
  - **Example:** “They mentioned hitting an ex-partner ‘in self-defense,’ which worries me.”
15. **Makes Promises They Don’t Keep: Constantly breaks promises and can’t be trusted to follow through.**
- Never \* Rarely \* Sometimes \* Often \* Always
  - **Reflection Prompt:** What promises have they broken (e.g., fidelity, financial support)? How does this affect your trust or expectations?
  - **Example:** “They promised to stop drinking and help with chores, but they’ve done neither, leaving me frustrated.”

**Tool:** Use a red flag tracker to document your responses, noting patterns (e.g., “Often” or “Always” responses). Highlight 2-3 behaviors with the highest frequency and explore why they resonate. If physical abuse or threats are present, prioritize safety and seek help immediately.

## Section 3: Reflecting on Red Flags and Taking Action

After assessing the red flags, reflect on their impact and decide on next steps. This section provides tools and strategies to address concerns and prioritize your well-being.

### Reflection Questions

- **After reviewing the red flags, are there any areas of concern in your relationship?**
  - **Example:** “I noticed controlling behavior and gaslighting happen often, which makes me feel trapped and confused.”
- **How do these behaviors affect your emotional, mental, or physical health?**
  - **Example:** “I feel anxious, depressed, and isolated, which impacts my sleep and work.”
- **Are there specific behaviors or patterns you’d like to address or change in your relationship?**
  - **Example:** “I want to set boundaries around my phone privacy and seek support to understand if this is abuse.”

**Tool:** Use a reflection journal to answer these questions weekly, tracking changes in your feelings and relationship dynamics. Set a goal (e.g., “Talk to a friend about my concerns by next week”).

### Action Steps

Based on your reflections, take proactive steps to address red flags and protect your well-being.

1. **Set Boundaries:** Identify 2-3 boundaries you’d like to establish (e.g., “No checking my phone”) and practice assertive communication (e.g., “I need you to respect my privacy—it’s important for my trust in us”).

- **Tool:** Use a boundary-setting worksheet (available on [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)) to outline your needs, consequences, and communication plan. Refer to the “Healthy Boundaries” worksheet for scripts.
- 2. **Seek Support:** Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, therapist, or domestic violence hotline to discuss your concerns and gain perspective.
  - **Tool:** Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) or, in Canada, the Canadian Women’s Foundation (1-866-863-0511) for confidential guidance. Check local shelters or crisis centers (e.g., [ShelterSafe.ca](https://www.ShelterSafe.ca) for Canada) for region-specific help.
- 3. **Document Patterns:** Keep a journal or digital log of incidents, including dates, behaviors, and your feelings. This can clarify patterns and, if needed, provide evidence for legal or therapeutic support.
  - **Tool:** Use a secure app like Day One or a password-protected document to store notes safely.
- 4. **Assess Safety:** If you feel physically or emotionally unsafe (e.g., physical abuse, threats), create or update a safety plan immediately (see “Creating Your Safety Plan” worksheet for guidance).
  - **Tool:** Work with a domestic violence advocate to develop a tailored escape plan, including safe places and emergency contacts.
- 5. **Educate Yourself:** Learn more about healthy vs. unhealthy relationships to contextualize your experience and build confidence in your decisions.
  - **Tool:** Read books, articles, or join online forums (e.g., [Loveisrespect.org](https://www.Loveisrespect.org)) for education and support.

**Brainstorm:** Write down 3-5 specific actions you’ll take based on your assessment, including timelines (e.g., “Call a therapist within two weeks” or “Set one boundary next time we argue”).

## Section 4: Understanding the Impact of Red Flags

This section provides context to help you recognize the seriousness of red flags and their potential to escalate into abuse if unaddressed.

### Why Red Flags Matter

- **Early Warning Signs:** Red flags like controlling behavior or gaslighting often start subtly but can worsen, leading to emotional, financial, or physical abuse.
- **Impact on Well-Being:** These behaviors can cause anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, isolation, or fear, undermining your health and autonomy.
- **Potential for Change:** While some patterns can be addressed with communication and support, others (e.g., violence, coercion) may require ending the relationship and seeking safety.

### Common Progression of Red Flags

- **Subtle to Severe:** Behaviors like excessive jealousy may begin with mild accusations but escalate to isolating you or threatening harm.

- **Cycle of Abuse:** Some relationships follow a cycle of tension, explosion (e.g., anger, abuse), and reconciliation (e.g., love bombing), trapping you in a harmful pattern.
- **Isolation as a Tactic:** Controlling or isolating behaviors often aim to make you dependent, reducing your support and increasing vulnerability.

**Tool:** Use a red flag progression chart to track how behaviors have evolved over time, noting increases in frequency or intensity. Share this with a therapist or advocate for insight.

**Reflection:** Write a paragraph about how red flags have affected your relationship or well-being. Are there behaviors you've overlooked or normalized? How might recognizing them change your approach?

## Additional Notes

- **You Are Not Alone:** Millions of people experience similar dynamics, and help is available through hotlines, therapists, and support groups.
- **Trust Your Instincts:** If something feels wrong, it's worth exploring, even if you're not sure. Your feelings are valid.
- **Confidentiality:** Keep this worksheet in a secure location (e.g., password-protected file, with a trusted friend) to protect your privacy, especially if your partner might access it.
- **Seek Help Immediately for Physical Abuse or Threats:** If you're in danger, call 911 or a crisis hotline before proceeding. Do not delay—your safety is paramount.

## Further Resources

- **National Hotlines:**
  - U.S.: National Domestic Violence Hotline – 1-800-799-7233, <https://www.thehotline.org/>
  - Canada: Canadian Women's Foundation – 1-866-863-0511, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/stop-family-violence/services.html>
- **Local Support:** Contact your local domestic violence shelter or crisis center (e.g., ShelterSafe.ca for Canada) for region-specific help.
- **Books:**
  - *Why Does He Do That?* by Lundy Bancroft – Insights on abusive behaviors and red flags in relationships.
  - *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin de Becker – Strategies for recognizing and responding to danger in relationships.
- **Online:**
  - Loveisrespect.org – Resources and support for teens and young adults on healthy relationships.
  - Psychology Today (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/>) – Find therapists near you for relationship counseling.
- **Apps:**
  - *Bright Sky* – A safety app for domestic abuse survivors with resources and tracking.
  - *SafeJourney* – Tools for mapping safe routes and storing emergency contacts.

## **Final Thoughts**

Identifying red flags is a courageous step toward safety and empowerment. This worksheet helps you assess potential unhealthy patterns, reflect on their impact, and take action to protect your well-being. Whether you decide to set boundaries, seek support, or make changes, you deserve a relationship rooted in trust, respect, and mutual care. Start by completing this assessment, reaching out to a resource, or journaling your thoughts—your journey to a healthier relationship begins here. If you're in danger, seek help immediately—your safety is the priority.