

# RELATIONSHIPS



**NZRP** BY THE PLAYERS  
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# Important conversations

**At certain times in your life you are going to have to have some conversations that require you to be courageous. It might be asking coach why you are not getting picked, asking for feedback, ringing someone to ask why you didn't get a job and what you need to work on, asking someone how you can improve or breaking up with a partner.**

## **Here are some tips to help you:**

- Have a clear goal about what you are trying to achieve by having the conversation.
- Try to use 'I' statements to put the focus and responsibility onto you. When you use 'You' statements it puts the responsibility and focus onto the listener and has the ability to get them defensive straight away. 'I' statements are also a way to help your message be heard.
- You need to own the situation and remember to make statements not accusations. For example: "I feel.....when..... because"
- Be calm and use a voice that you would use if you were asking someone to "Please pass the salt."
- It is useful to write down some points on what you want to say.
- Take some deep breaths before you start talking.
- When the person replies back to you, make sure you don't interrupt them and let them finish.
- Try to stick to the facts.
- It is important to remain calm especially if you are trying to get a certain outcome.
- If things get heated, or you feel like you have hit a brick wall, you can also stop the conversation and say "Let's continue this another time when everyone is a bit calmer," or "Let's go away and think about this and continue this conversation at another time."
- Challenging conversations can improve situations as long as you communicate what you are trying to achieve clearly. For example: "I would like to understand why I am not getting much game time and what I need to work on to change that."

**"With courageous conversations, it is important to ask the hard questions, so you improve and know where you stand, but be prepared that you might not like the answer. It is also crucial to be a good listener. If the conversation is hard and it is for the right reasons, it is important to have it, otherwise it will play on your mind. The wording and tone that you use is really important. Keep the emotion out of it and try to not to make it personal." Sam Cane**



# Achieving change in people

In order to get people to change you need to dance with them instead of wrestle with them.



**Life is constantly changing, and sometimes we have to help foster change in ourselves and in those around us. It might be because you want to make a change in your own life or to encourage change in your family, in a team or in a work situation.**

In order for change to happen, the motivation needs to come from within the person themselves. **IT IS HARD TO GET PEOPLE TO CHANGE IF THEY ARE NOT INVESTED IN IT.**

Approaching people to help orchestrate change can require courage and involve some difficult conversations but there are some skills that you can use, which can result in more productive outcomes.

## How do we do it?

First, you have to be open to interacting in a respectful manner, which given the person and situation can sometimes be tough. You don't have to sympathise with them (feel sorry for them), you just have to try to understand them, to be able to walk a mile in their shoes and get an idea of what makes them tick.

When you start the discussion, you should convey to the person that you are really trying to understand what's going on with them and what this problem means to them. When you really try to understand people, they feel it and are more likely to engage and share information.

**Here are some helpful reflections and questions you can use to do this:**

- It sounds like things have been really tough for you recently
- That must've been a real challenge
- Tell me more about what has been going on for you
- I'm really keen to understand this a little more. Can you explain what happened with x, y, z

Notice the reactions you get when you use these techniques and what type of information you get back.

One thing to be aware of is whether you are really trying to understand and empathise with the person's needs or just listening to the bits that you want to hear.

To enhance the success of the outcome, you need to power share, that is to work with the person and not over them. It needs to be a partnership, so the person you are talking to contributes to the conversation and greatly influences the nature of the discussion. You should aim to do 20 per cent of the talking and they should be doing 80 per cent. The goal is to get them engaged in the conversation and, ideally, to get them to come up with the solutions.

# Achieving change in people

## Scenarios

To see how this technique works in everyday life, let's examine two totally different scenarios with each requiring action towards change.

### 1) Returning to New Zealand

**Scenario: You're planning to return to New Zealand after living and playing overseas.**

This situation requires complete honesty where fears and concerns will be discussed, as will strategies to deal with those concerns.

If you know you are working towards coming back to New Zealand (perhaps you might be on the last year of your current contract), it is helpful to work through a mental rehearsal of your return home before you arrive.

There are plenty of things that need to be taken care of **[See Returning Home in the Playing Overseas section]**, however you also need to take into account the mental side of your changing situation. By pre-empting and mentally rehearsing what it will feel like, and what you could possibly experience when you return, you can enhance your experience and make it more positive and constructive.

**Preparation will reduce anxiety** – consider it like doing reps in the gym but for your brain. By going through the scenario in your brain, you will be stronger and more ready to face it when the time comes to move back.

It is empowering to have this mental preparation up your sleeve because when you get home and go through all the fundamentals of returning – e.g. getting a job, deciding where you are going to live – you'll already be mentally prepared for the challenge.

#### Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is life going to look like for me at home?
- How will this make me feel?
- How am I going to deal with it? [Consider the strategies you've successfully used in the past to manage new and challenging situations]
- How can I reduce the amount of surprises I will have in my new life back home?
- Who will I check in with to ensure my mental health is getting the right support?

### 2) Drinking too much

**Scenario: You have someone in your life who is drinking too much alcohol and it is affecting those around them.**

Here you can use the cost versus benefit technique. You can't tell someone they have a problem and expect them to change. They have to realise this themselves. An effective way of helping them to do this is by completing a cost versus benefit analysis. By using this technique, you give the person the opportunity to identify what's going on in their life, to understand how it is are impacting them currently and how it might impact them in the future. The aim is to help get them to a place where they realise that reducing or stopping drinking outweighs the current situation.

Alcohol, and for that matter drugs and gambling, can be used as escapism to get away from problems that can be very deep rooted. It can also be used as a replacement feel-good factor to try to replace those feelings that used to come through playing sport. Obviously, using alcohol, drugs or gambling to replace this feel-good factor has physical, mental and financial repercussions. The more we can get the person themselves seeing and understanding this, the better the outcomes are likely to be for them.



Preparing for your trip home can reduce anxiety

# Achieving change in people

A key strategy when discussing anything potentially uncomfortable is to ask for permission to discuss it. For example, say something like 'Are you okay if we talk about where you are at?'

Why do you need to do this? Well, when discussing things that are potentially shaming or difficult, you want the person to feel in control of the discussion. By asking them if they are willing to discuss a specific topic, they are in control of whether or not the discussion goes ahead. This simple strategy speeds up the buy-in process, opens communication channels, encourages a more productive discussion and ultimately achieves better results.

If they say no, they either don't see it as an issue yet or they are not ready to discuss it. The number one rule in this situation is to not push. Instead plant some seeds around the topic then try to revisit it at a later date.

If they say yes, start with an open-ended question. Try to see the situation from their point of view and use the four questions from the 'How do we do it?' section above. There are also some more useful questions below. Using open-ended questions, which require more than a yes or no answer, is important. Explore where they want to be in their life. It is not about pestering them, the goal is to get them to buy into their own vision and get them talking about their situation.

Ask them "Where would you like to be in two years' time?" [Note: the younger the person, the shorter the timeframe you should use. For example, for a teenager ask where they'd like to be in three to six months.]

Then ask, "Is there anything that is hindering you from achieving that?"

Don't be too pushy or too hard, be interested in their response. As previously mentioned, you should be aiming to do 20 per cent of the talking and let them do 80 per cent.

**Paraphrase:** present the information in a new way and paraphrase their response without judgement. For example: "So your love of drinking is coming at a cost to your job and family?"

**Double-sided (cost v benefit):** reflect both sides of their contradiction: "On one hand, you love drinking, but on the other hand, you can see the risks if this continues."

**Affective (reflecting the emotion):** address the emotion that has been expressed or implied: "You're a bit worried about the risks drinking brings."

**Summarise:** end your discussion with a collaborative summary with clear outcomes. Reinforce what their change talk was, highlight their realisations and note what actions they have agreed to take. Small achievable steps are better than big, hard-to-maintain goals: "So, you said you are going to have five alcohol-free days a week to start with, and that you were going to use [xyz] strategies to achieve this."

**Focus on achieving small things** – You don't climb Mt Everest when you first learn to walk! This is not an easy one and requires some patience! But remember...

**The small thing that gets done is better than the big thing that doesn't.**



Is someone in your life drinking so much alcohol that it affects those around them?

# Achieving change in people

**Change talk is any kind of talk where the person is talking about the benefits of change and/or the negatives of their current situation.**

Once you have built a good relationship and then got the person talking about the changes that they would like to make, it is important you don't try to persuade them or fix anything yourself. Regardless of whether your ideas are useful, ideas are always better received when they come from the person themselves.

**Instead of trying to solve things yourself, try asking these seven questions and listen carefully to what the person says next:**

1. Do you want to make this change?
2. What are three good reasons for making change?
3. On a scale of zero to 10, how important is it and why?
4. How might you be able to do it?
5. What have you already done?
6. What do you intend to do?
7. What are you ready or willing to do?

**Listen very carefully and give back a summary of their motivations for change. Then ask one more question:**

**What do you think you will do next?**

People will often suggest very big next steps, which could set them up for failure. In order to change, they need to start with consistent, realistic, achievable steps.

Sometimes people can be in a state of hopelessness where they feel unable to affect outcomes. In these cases, you may face some resistance. They may be either reluctant, rebellious or resigned to the fact that they feel it is too late to change.

In these situations, the last thing you should do is push. Remember, ultimately what matters is what the person thinks, and not what you think. Instead of pushing, you could plant some seeds by using these techniques:

## **1. Develop discrepancy**

A conflict in thinking – by making the following double-sided reflection (or a variation of it).

“So, on one hand you are not ready to make any changes at the moment, and on the other, you have talked about how your current lifestyle is not only affecting you negatively, but also people you care about. How do these two things fit together for you?”

## **2. Ask an evocative question**

“What would need to happen in your life before you would consider making any kind of change?”

“What would it take for you to get serious about making some changes?”

“Right now, you seem reluctant to make any changes, which I understand. I am wondering, though, if you were to make just one really small change, what could that look like?”

## **Summary**

When trying to help people make changes, it is crucial that we don't offer unsolicited advice by telling people what we think they should do. Instead, where possible, let them have the ball, let them take the lead, let them do the work!

Remember that, ultimately, we want them telling us what we want to tell them. After all, we all think that we have the best ideas, so why not create an environment where the person, not you, becomes the primary problem-solver.

The irony is that most people, to some degree at least, know what they should be doing in order to make a change. It's just that, for whatever reason, they are stuck and are finding it hard to move from a position of 'knowing' to 'doing'.

By building a strong relationship, working in a non-judgemental atmosphere and using a handful of key techniques, we can help people to uncover solutions to their problems by helping them to make sense of what they likely already know. Not only does this empower the person (“I can solve my own issues”), but it also takes the pressure off the helper as, essentially, they're playing the role of facilitator by guiding the person towards their own answers. Now that sounds like a win/win if ever there was one!



**Create an environment where the person, not you, becomes the primary problem-solver**

# Relationship dynamics

**Going overseas to play rugby or returning home to continue the next phase of your career outside of rugby can provide many changes in roles and circumstances, which can affect your relationships.**

## Returning from rugby trips away

As a player, when you return home from an overseas trip, it is important you pull your weight around the house, doing your share of chores and spending time with the kids even if you're tired and just want to relax or spend time on your phone.

It is important to remember that while you're away there has been a routine in place. Do your best to support that routine and not disrupt it. It can be tempting to just do the fun stuff with the kids, like playing games, but it's important that you also do your share at home and make sure your partner gets a break.

## Things other players have found helpful for transitioning home:

- Having a plan with your partner for arrival, for example arranging to get home while your family is out so you can unpack and settle in by yourself then focus on family when they get home.
- Before you get home discuss the routine your partner has in place and what they would like you to take over and what you will do together.
- Unpacking is a mental signal you are home and are not leaving for now.
- Talk with your partner about what you both need and put plans in the calendar to ensure both of you get it.
- It's ok to want to catch up with friends too, but work with your partner to create a balance for your time at home. Be careful not to overbook yourselves. Have some empty days to allow you both to unwind.
- If there are jobs waiting for you that you know you won't get to, arrange to pay someone to come and take care of these so you can focus on family.
- Plan something special to acknowledge that your partner has been holding it down while you have been travelling. Date nights help keep you connected and your relationship healthy.

Sam and Fred Whitelock  
at the airport



## Going overseas

Playing overseas usually means that you get more time at home with your family than you do in New Zealand. There are fewer media and promotional commitments and, in some teams, you'll spend less time on the field. The upside of this is that you will get to spend more time with your partner and children, however this can take some adjusting to. This is a good chance for you to plan some trips exploring your new country with those around you. Make the most of the opportunity of being in a new place.

It can be a good idea to move to the new country ahead of your partner and family so you can sort things out, get familiar with your team and new environment and establish some connections for your partner/family when they arrive. As a player, you'll go into a team environment with instant connections but your partner doesn't have that instant network so it can be very lonely for them. Try to connect them with other partners and families. Overseas players tend to bond in together as they are having similar experiences.

## Going overseas

- Contact the NZRPA to find other Kiwis in the area
- Connect with other players' partners and have social gatherings
- Plan trips to explore your new country
- Invite family to come and stay
- Have things to look forward to
- Take up new hobbies
- Try online study
- Be careful of relying on alcohol heavily to help you cope with this change. If you become worried about your own or your partner's drinking over this time seek help.
- Have people outside of your relationship to lean on and share your worries with - this might be a friend at home or a counsellor. Having these people helps stop your relationship becoming overloaded at a time when you are likely to both be adjusting and finding different things hard.

## Post-rugby careers

When you have decided it is time to stop playing and concentrate on another career, it can be a time of mixed feelings. This can be a very exciting but it can also cause you to become anxious and concerned about what the future holds. This is normal given you are leaving the comfort of something you know. There can also be regret and guilt about where your professional rugby journey ended. This, in turn, can affect your relationships at home and you might be tempted to take that stress out on the ones you love the most.

If you find yourself struggling to manage your emotions positively, reach out for help by talking to your GP, agent, PDM, calling NZRPA on **0800 PLAYER** or **INSTEP** on **0800 284 678**, or access the website [www.insteplimited.com](http://www.insteplimited.com). Text or call **1737** in NZ to talk to a trained counsellor

By working on your post-rugby career early while you are still playing and having money put aside for while you are working on your post-rugby career can reduce some of the stress.

You also need to consider what your partner wants to do to. More often than not they have supported you during your career, so it is important that you support them. They also might want to engage in a new career.

There can be a period of uncertainty so try different things. Be kind to yourself and be realistic, you don't have to have all the answers. Sometimes it is easier to get a job once you already have one. Some players say it takes about two years to fully transition out of the game until they feel settled. Some players also need time away from the game completely, while some need to keep connected.

Just be mindful that using coping strategies such as alcohol and gambling to fill rugby's space are not good options. See **Beyond the Playing Days** section of **EXPAND** for more information on transitions or other parts of this section for mental wellness tips. The **NZRPA** also runs a rugby club for retired professional players providing camaraderie, networking, support and advice. Also, all Super Rugby clubs now have alumni, which provide support to players as well. Call **0800 PLAYER** for more information or visit the **Beyond the Playing Days** section of **EXPAND** for more details.



Tatum-Lee, Rema-Rae Guthrie and mum Niall Williams at the airport

# Making relationships work

## The rollercoaster ride

**A relationship can be compared to a ride on a rollercoaster. It can go up and down and take different twists and turns as you ride the journey of life. You buckle in and try to enjoy it for the most part. Just like the exhilaration of a rollercoaster ride, there will be bits that make you laugh and bits that make you scream. However, it is your perception, personality, attitude and effort that will determine how you view the ride.**

## Making a long-term commitment

Many people wonder how they will know if someone is 'the one'. When you make a long-term commitment to someone, it is important to remember you aren't picking the person who is 'perfect,' you are committing to the person you are willing to do the work with.

A long-term commitment is about choosing to keep working on yourselves and your relationship rather than having met 'the one' where no work is required.

### This section covers:

- Building good foundations
- What healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships look like
- Keys to maintaining a strong relationship
- Parenting
- Dealing with conflict
- Breaking up
- Parenting after separation



Relationships can be compared to a rollercoaster ride.

## Building good foundations

Ironically for such an important aspect of life, there is not much formal education provided to help us build good relationships. Research into relationships shows there is a honeymoon period where you and your new partner are still getting to know each other and you are likely to be on your best behaviour. That honeymoon timeframe is anywhere from six to 30 months.

Allowing you and your partner the time to move out of the honeymoon phase and decide if you really can live together long term is a good idea before taking big steps like having children, moving in or leaving the country together. This is especially important if either of you have children from a previous relationship as kids rely on you for stability. Doing our own work before you commit to someone is important. This might mean recovering from a bad break-up or having the time to explore behaviours we might have learnt in childhood and don't want to repeat.

Doing our own work first will help you be really clear on what healthy, unhealthy or abusive relationships look like. Not only does this help you know what you are working towards but also which red flags should never be ignored early in a relationship.



As in a building, solid foundations are important in any relationship

# Types of relationships



## A healthy relationship looks like:

**Respect** – You know and value each other's strengths, you see each other's potential, you respect each other's relationships with whānau and friends. When you mess up you apologise and work to do better.

**Equality** – This means having equal power over your own lives, making fair decisions together and valuing their views as much as your own. There is balance between you. You take responsibility for managing your own stress.

**Support** – This means supporting each other's goals and dreams, and being yourself without judgement. You uphold each other's mana. You build each other up, not tear each other down.

## An unhealthy relationship looks like:

**Isolation** – You might feel pressured to quit the activities you used to love and spend all your time together at the expense of your other relationships. You feel like you're losing your sense of self.

**Lots of conflict** – Instead of talking, you fight often but it never gets resolved, or you fight for hours at a time, pick fights with each other or you use sulking or the silent treatment to get your own way. All couples argue, but in a healthy relationship when you fight, you fight fair – no putdowns, no threats, no punching anything and you can both let things go.

**No trust** – If there is no trust, it can result in checking up on your partner, accusing them of cheating and/or looking at their phone without their permission. A healthy relationship has boundaries, you don't need to know everything about your partner – you both have the right to privacy.

## An abusive relationship looks like:

**Power imbalance** – The biggest thing that all abusive relationships have is one person consistently having more power than the other. This might be created by force, by putting your partner down or by assuming what you want outweighs their wishes.

**Controlling** – This is when one partner dictates what the other can and can't do, what they should wear and who they can see. It often involves using jealousy to justify controlling behaviour, making it hard for them to spend time with friends and family.

**Fear** – If one person feels afraid or anxious about their partner's behaviour and moods, this is abusive behaviour. This might include fear of violence, of intimidating or threatening behaviour, being too scared to say what you really think about things, or feeling like you're walking on eggshells around them. If your relationship has red flags for abusive or unhealthy behaviour, which has become a pattern, seek help as these warnings often get worse over time. They should never be ignored and you shouldn't try to manage them on your own.

Even in healthy relationships there may be times when one or both of you struggle with good communication. It may even feel as if you have fallen out of love (or even like) with your partner. You might find that internal or external factors contribute to this, but with commitment and work there is always the opportunity to get back on track.

Don't be too proud to seek couples counselling. A good counsellor or psychologist who you connect well with will be able to give you strategies. **(For counselling information see the Helpline page later in this section.)**



# 15 keys to a successful relationship



**Once you are committed to a long-term relationship, here are 15 ways you can help keep it healthy.**

**Be independent** – You have to be happy within yourself and maintain a sense of self first.

**Be a good listener** – Listening and hearing are two different things. Listening to what your partner has to say creates a platform for healthy conversations on matters that arise.

**Agree to disagree** – You don't have to agree on and have the same views about everything. Remember respect is one of the most important aspects of a healthy relationship.

**Communicate** – Know your partner's 'love language'. Understand that your partner's love language could be totally different to yours. Is it words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service, quality time or physical touch? There are plenty of books available on this topic.

**Acceptance** – You are not going to change your partner so change your perception and focus on the positive instead of the negative.

**Take responsibility** – Be responsible for your successes and failures. When you disagree or have an argument take responsibility for your actions, including anything you said or did that was hurtful, created adversity or was unthoughtful.

**Never take one another for granted** – When you get complacent in your relationship it is easy to take your partner for granted. However, you should never come from a place where you don't appreciate them.

**Date night** – Spending time together strengthens your bond. It doesn't have to be expensive but having

dedicated time to spend with each other is a part of a successful relationship.

**Add romance** – A little romance goes a long way to strengthen the relationship.

**Keep intimacy alive** – Intimacy is an important part of a healthy relationship and this can take many different forms.

**Compliments** – Acknowledging your partner's positive attributes and paying compliments goes a long way towards keeping the divorce lawyers away.

**Look for the soft emotion** – Behind a hard emotion like anger is always a soft one such as jealousy, sadness or disappointment. Finding the soft emotions under someone's hard emotion will help you empathise with their true emotion.

**Let go of the fantasy** – Have realistic expectations of your relationship. Even though society constructs the concept of fairy-tale relationships this is often not the case. This also has an impact on you as an individual. Manage your own expectations and live in the real world.

**Do not control** – Do not try to control your partner and take away their independence. If you feel you are being controlled or are controlling, seek professional help from a counsellor. This could be in the form of controlling money, outings, access to family and friends or them not being able to do things without you.

**Do not use the 'd' word** – Do not use divorce as a threat. This is an immature strategy and does not help solve whatever problems you are trying to work through.

**Source:** marriage.com

**Having children will change the dynamics of a relationship as they come with a different set of rewards and stresses. Children can bring so much joy to a relationship, but they also provide different challenges at different ages.**

When they are new-borns they are dependent on you for survival, and sleep deprivation can put strain on relationships. If partners do not contribute around the house to an expected level this can also result in resentment especially when emotions are high. As the children get older, they will test their parents' patience, so it is important that you both know the game plan when it comes to rules and discipline. If you agree on these ahead of time it will prevent friction in the parental relationship. As they turn to the teenage years and their knowledge and confidence grows so sometimes does their ability to challenge parental boundaries and decisions. Once again, a united approach on the parenting front will help reduce conflict in your relationship.

**Tips for maintaining a strong relationship while parenting**

**Make time for each other** – Maybe an island retreat isn't possible, but date nights at home when the kids are asleep are a quick, cheap way for tired, broke parents to spend time together.

**Support each other** – Everyone still has goals after becoming parents, so be a team to help each other achieve non-parenting goals. Just knowing each other's hopes and dreams will help you grow together instead of apart

**Laugh together** – Parenting is full of gross and cute moments, sharing these helps you feel like a team.

**Don't be afraid to argue** – If something is upsetting one of you talk it out, even if it means things get heated. Don't be afraid to raise difficult issues as modelling healthy conflict resolution is one of the skills we should all teach our kids.

**Fight fair** – When you argue you both need to fight fair – no putdowns, no threats and no punching anything. Both be prepared to let things go.

**Be kind** – Parenting can be hard, so always assume that you are both doing the best you can and help each other out when one of you is struggling. Falling into patterns of blame or anger can erode trust really quickly.

**Work towards equality** – This means placing equal value on what you each bring to the family, making fair decisions together and having equal power over your own lives.

**Apologise freely and sincerely** – We all mess up. A happy home is one where everyone knows how to apologise and work to do better next time.

**Celebrate** – It doesn't matter if it is your anniversary, your birthdays, Mother's Day or Father's Day, just make sure at some point in the year everyone gets a turn at being appreciated and celebrated.

**Ask for help** – Any relationship can get stuck and counselling can really help get it back on track. If that is not an option financially there is a world of books, podcasts and friends who can help you learn new skills together.



Jerzy-James Orbyn Te Puru o Tamaki Royal

# Dealing with conflict



**Conflict is a part of being in a relationship. However, it is how you deal with it that can make a huge difference to the success of that relationship.**

Psychological researcher, professor and clinician Dr John Gottman did four decades of work on predicting divorce. As a result, his Gottman method has a 91% success rate. The method aims to increase friendship and closeness in couples. Gottman believed that dealing with conflict was an important part of a relationship even if there was not always a solution for that conflict. Gottman concentrated on encouraging couples to focus on building a shared life together, which involved being more considerate and attentive to your partner. By making tiny positive changes in everyday things, even small things, a relationship can grow and develop by being more stable and supportive.



## Strategies for dealing with conflict

Gottman identified four negative factors as being the most destructive in a relationship. He named them the 'Four Horsemen'. They are:

### **Criticism – When you imply there is something wrong with your partner and they feel attacked.**

Be specific and speak to your differences rather than saying what you think your partner is doing wrong. "I know you like it tidy and mess doesn't bother me" and "I think the pressure to keep everything spotless is stressful, but what about if we keep the living spaces tidy but I get a junk chair in our room where I can drop stuff?"

**Defensiveness – When people feel they are being attacked.** Listen to the complaint then accept some shared responsibility.

**Stonewalling – Refusing to talk – this is a method used 80% more by men – or walking out.** Take a break and lower the tone of the disagreement. Find a way of communicating that works for both of you, write a letter each then come together to talk, go for a walk to talk things out instead of sitting face to face, or use counselling sessions to help practise communicating well.

**Contempt – Treating your partner as inferior or mocking them. This is the most serious of the four and the hardest of them to heal.** If you use this behaviour seek help to change and make amends to your partner. A good question to ask yourself is always, "What will it do to my partner and to us for me to say this nasty thing?"

**Conflict is part of life and learning how to deal with it in an appropriate manner will enhance your relationship.**

# Breaking up

**Despite our best intentions sometimes relationships break down. Going through a relationship break-up can be a very stressful and emotional time. For some people, it can be similar to grieving a death and for others it can be a huge relief, or it can even be a mixture of both.**

It is important that you show yourself some self-compassion and get a good support network around you. Family and friends can be very helpful during this experience. It is also important you seek independent legal and financial advice on your situation. If necessary, contact Inland Revenue to facilitate child support payments if you don't have a private arrangement and also to see if you are entitled to Working for Families tax credits. Work and Income is able to advise you on any financial subsidies for which you might be eligible.

**When going through a break-up your body can respond physically and emotionally. It is common to experience:**

- Loss of appetite
- Lack of sleep
- Sore stomach
- Crying
- Varying emotional states

**It is important to look after yourself during this time by doing the following:**

- Exercise
- Recognise closure is something you will give yourself by looking after yourself and reflecting on what has happened – your ex can't give you closure

- Try to make good food choices (even if you lose our appetite try to get good nutrients into your body)
- See a counsellor or psychologist
- If you can't sleep at least rest your body
- Keep a good hygiene routine and make sure you shower every day
- Visit your GP if you feel you need medication or other support to help you at this time
- Try not to turn to drugs or alcohol to numb your pain
- Try not to keep checking your ex on social media (blocking them can be helpful)
- Surround yourself with people who you feel good around and who support you
- Stay away from drunk texting or phone calls to your ex

If you are struggling to function in day-to-day life it is important you seek professional help.

**The seven emotional stages most people go through after a break-up are:**

1. Shock and denial
2. Desperate need for answers
3. Fear, loneliness and sadness
4. Bargaining [a.k.a. the 'crazy' stage]
5. Anger
6. Peace and acceptance
7. Forgiveness

[Source: Jennifer Maldonado - Seven Stages of break up and how to cope]

[For a list of helpful numbers please see the Helpful Page page in the Health & Wellbeing section of EXPAND].



# Parenting during break-ups & from far away

**If there are children involved and no safety issues for any party, try to maintain a healthy relationship for their sake. Do not involve them in your issues. Kids are not chess pawns and should be not used as weapons of power. How you behave during the period of separation can leave life-long scars on kids and even go on to affect their own ability to have healthy relationships.**



Issues that you need to work through like matrimonial property and financial settlements are not children's concerns and should be kept private away from them. Parenting agreements can help alleviate tension to ensure all parties know the custody arrangements. These can be done through your lawyer.

Always remember your focus should be on getting the kids through this in the best way possible. Focusing on your children's mental and physical wellbeing should be your top priority.

## Parenting from far away

### Did you know?

Barack Obama describes having a close and loving relationship with his mother even though he was raised by his grandparents in Hawaii while she worked and lived in Indonesia.

While it might not be common, it is possible to be a great parent raising great kids from far away. If you are going to be parenting from another country or have separated from your partner, here are some tips to make and keep that relationship strong.

**Keep contact regular** – When you live overseas you have to work harder to maintain a meaningful relationship with your child. Schedule in time, let your

child know when they will hear from you next and always be in contact when you say you will. Your child needs to be able to trust that you will do what you say you will. Keep these conversations focused on you and your child's lives. Don't use contact to grill them on your ex as doing this makes kids feel guilty and you want them to enjoy their conversations with you.

**You're in charge of making contact** – As the parent, it is up to you to keep in contact. Kids will go through periods of not wanting to talk on the phone/Facetime, but keep communicating anyway. Remember if you were living in the same house they would go through phases of not wanting to talk much. This isn't personal, it's normal development and they still need to know you are there and that you love them.

**Have a toolbox of ways to stay connected** – Even if phone calls are brief, you can let your tāmāriki know you are thinking of them in a whole range of ways. Send postcards, photos and letters. Facetime them, read them stories over Skype and send good night texts. Start traditions like sending a magnet or lollies from the places you visit. Regular small contact is as important as big heart-to-hearts.

**Build your relationship with their day-to-day carer** – You and your co-parent will be able to do so much more for your child if you are a team. This isn't always possible, but don't write it off without at least trying. You can help this process by:

- both attending a parenting through separation course either together or separately
- visiting a counsellor for a few sessions before you leave the country, so you can make a plan for parenting together and work out what support they need if they are to be parenting without your day-to-day support
- paying your child support, either through Inland Revenue or directly, on time, every time
- being generous and showing your appreciation for those doing the day-to-day care, offering extra money for birthday parties or school uniforms, and helping your child arrange Mother's/Father's Day presents
- having family or friends who are close by offer support. Can your parents or siblings help with sleepovers, drop offs, school holidays? This will keep your kid feeling connected to your side of their family while also giving your child's day-to-day carer much-needed support.

# Parenting during break-ups & from far away

**Keep in touch with the day to day** – You might not be there at the school gate but you can still get to know your child's important people, learn the names of their teachers, coaches and friends, so they can easily tell you about their life. Most schools have online records systems so you can keep on top of their reports. Ask to be added to the school email list so you can ask about things that are happening.

**Tell them stories about your life** – For every question you ask about their day, tell them something about you too – who was your best friend at school, how did you feel starting college, what funny things did you and your brothers and sisters get up to?

**Homecoming** – It may be difficult for your child to adjust to having you there face to face after being away. They may act out on your first days back, so stay calm, hang in there and remember this is them working through their feelings – they are not rejecting you.

Talking and making a plan with your child about what to expect when you come home can help them feel secure. Let them know where you will be staying, how much they will see you and if they are going to go on holiday with you.

Keep their needs at the centre of all your plans, it might be too overwhelming for your child to spend a

fortnight with you and the whānau after not seeing you for a year, so ease in and do what works for everyone.

**Be kind to yourself** – There are going to be times you feel like you are missing out on their whole lives, so get support for yourself and remember you will be their parent for the rest of your life and as they get older contact will become easier.

## Co-parenting tips for separated parents

**Keep the lines of communication open** – Setting up ways to share information about your kids' day-to-day lives can be important for your children's wellbeing. Getting a call from Mum or Dad because they have heard it was a bad day takes the burden off your kids having to ask for this.

**Tell your kids only what they need to know** – It can be tempting to confide in your kids, but a good yardstick is if your kids can't fix it, don't give it to them to worry about. Hearing that they are loved, that it will all be okay and knowing when they will see you again can't be said enough though.



**When parenting it is important to try to maintain a healthy relationship with the other parent while nurturing the growth and development of your child**

# Parenting during break-ups & from far away

**Getting divorced only lasts a short time but you will be parents forever** – Don't let the hurt you feel early on set up the co-parenting relationship you will have forever. In five years' time, you will most likely be in love with someone else and the heat will be out of your break-up, so think about the long game and work towards being friendly allies even though you are no longer romantic partners.

**Respect your child's relationship with the other parent** – Whatever your feelings, your kid's relationship with their other parent is separate to yours. They need to be free to love both parents without feeling guilty or disloyal.

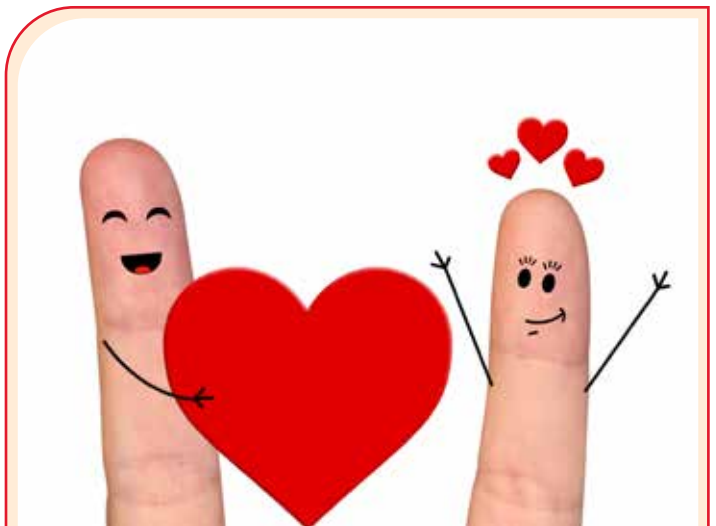
**Ask for help** – Separation is emotionally draining, so attending post-separation counselling together can help you to get on the same page around co-parenting. Think about attending your local 'parenting through separation' course, (either separately or together), as it can give you both tools that will help. Find people you can grieve this change with as it's important for moving on.

**Remember a relationship that has ended is not a failure** – Just because you and your partner have ended your relationship doesn't mean your family is 'broken' or that the relationship failed. If you both want it then new, happier ways of being a family can grow from this change. Ideally you will both be dancing at your kids' weddings in years to come with only good vibes!

**Introducing new partners** – Take your time introducing new partners to your children. Ideally, they will only meet a new partner when you are really serious. It can be hard for kids to get attached to a lot of different adults so either hold off introducing your new partner for the first six months or have your partner meet your kids as part of a wider group of people they know (eg at a family barbeque).

**You and your ex just can't agree** – Court should always be a last resort or a safety tool if your partner poses a threat to you. If you and your ex can't agree on visitation, you can access mediation or create a separation agreement through the family court. Visit [www.justice.govt.nz/family](http://www.justice.govt.nz/family) for more information.

**\* When couples have separated due to abuse these tips don't apply, as there are different safety considerations. Get advice on co-parenting and safety, from your local Women's Refuge, Stopping Violence Service or Skylight Trust. Find a parenting through separation course: [www.justice.govt.nz/family/care-of-children/parenting-through-separation](http://www.justice.govt.nz/family/care-of-children/parenting-through-separation)**



## New relationships

**If there was not a third party involved in your break-up, it is a good idea to give yourself some healing time before you jump into a new relationship. Counselling is recommended to reduce the chance of taking emotional baggage from your previous relationship into the next one.**

**Males tend to move on quicker than females, but it is recommended that you take a year off or at least six months as a minimum before you put yourself out there again. This is very subjective and individual, but it really comes down to when you feel you are ready to open yourself up to someone new. If you decide to use dating apps like Tinder or Bumble, check out the online dating safety tips in this section.**



# Online dating

**When you set up profiles on online dating sites, make sure you protect your personal information. Never give out your place of work, address, phone number, whether you have children, your email address, your credit card details or any other financial information.**

Keep kids safe by making sure your dating profiles don't have any information about your little brothers or sisters or your children. Be careful what you share about them and the photos you post of them.

**If you do decide to meet up with someone you have met online, here are some safety tips:**

- **Get to know the person first** – it is safer to communicate through the dating app or website.
- **Do some research on them** – look online to see if what they have told you matches up with information about them on other sites like Facebook.
- **Always meet in a public place** – it is safer to be around other people when you first meet.
- **Tell friends and family where you are going** – keep your cell phone charged, give your friends or family updates and let them know when you get home safely.
- **Sort your own transport** – this means that you are in control and independent and can leave if it doesn't work out. It also means you're not dependent on the other person to pick you up, so they don't know where you live.
- **Stay sober** - drugs and alcohol can affect your judgement and potentially put you in danger.

## Netsafe

For more information and non-judgemental, free advice go to [netsafe.co.nz](https://www.netsafe.co.nz)  
If you feel you are being bullied or harassed online, report it to [netsafe.org.nz/report](https://www.netsafe.org.nz/report)



## 10 important digital communication principles:

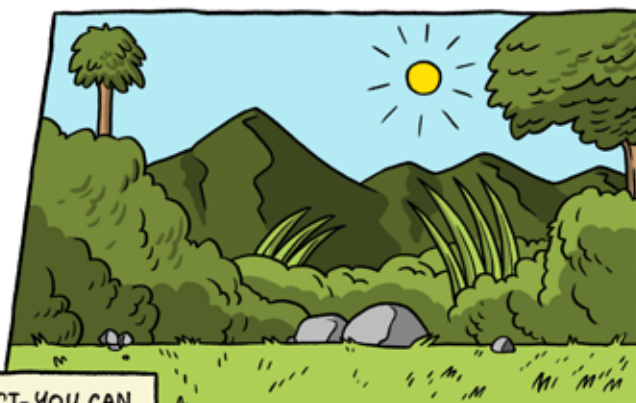
- 01** should not disclose sensitive personal facts about an individual
- 02** should not be threatening, intimidating or menacing
- 03** should not be grossly offensive to a reasonable person in the position of the affected individual
- 04** should not be indecent or obscene
- 05** should not be used to harass an individual
- 06** should not make a false allegation
- 07** should not contain a matter that is published in breach of confidence
- 08** should not incite or encourage anyone to send a message to an individual for the purpose of causing harm to the individual
- 09** should not incite or encourage an individual to commit suicide
- 10** should not denigrate an individual by reason of his or her colour, race, ethnic or national origins, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability

[Source: The Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015]

IF YOU'VE EVER GONE CAMPING, YOU'LL KNOW THE CLASSIC RULE: LEAVE THE AREA BETTER THAN WHEN YOU FOUND IT.



IT'S ABOUT RESPECT-YOU CAN BE SELFISH, TRASH THE SITE AND BAIL IF YOU WANT...



BUT IN THE LONG RUN IT'S BETTER FOR EVERYONE IF YOU LOOK AFTER THE PLACE.

# THE CAMPSITE RULE

CASUAL SEX IS LIKE THAT TOO. YOU CAN BE A JERK IF YOU WANT- DO WHATEVER, MOVE ON...



OR, BY BEING RESPECTFUL, YOU CAN MAKE IT A POSITIVE, HEALTHY EXPERIENCE.



EVERYONE INVOLVED SHOULD FEEL BETTER AFTERWARDS.

## SIX TIPS FOR HAPPY CAMPERS

### 1. BE PREPARED

- CONDOMS HELP PREVENT STIs AND UNPLANNED PREGNANCY: TWO THINGS YOU DON'T WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND OR TAKE WITH YOU.



2. RESPECT EACH OTHER'S BOUNDARIES DURING SEX.



3. RESPECT EACH OTHER'S PRIVACY AFTER SEX.

IF YOUR FRIENDS FEEL LIKE THEY WERE THERE, YOU'VE OVERSHARED.



4. WATCH OUT FOR HUMANS: THE PERSON YOU ARE WITH IS A HUMAN WITH FEELINGS, TREAT THEM LIKE THAT.



5. CHECK, CHECK, CHECK: BODY LANGUAGE CAN BE HARD TO READ WHEN WE DON'T KNOW SOMEONE, GO SLOW AND CHECK IN.



6: SUNLIGHT TEST: DOES YOUR BEHAVIOUR AFTER DARK STAND UP TO THE LIGHT OF DAY? BE SOMEONE YOU ARE PROUD OF.



BE A LEADER IN YOUR ACTIONS AND BY HELPING OTHERS DO THE RIGHT THING

CAMPSITE RULE ORIGINALLY COMES FROM ADVICE COLUMNIST DAN SAVAGE

# Consent, the law & safe sex

**Whether you are hooking up with the love of your life or having a one-night stand, consent is key. Remember good consent is about good communication.**

Consent is when someone agrees, gives permission, or says “yes” to sexual activity. Consent is always freely given and all people in a sexual situation must feel that they are able to say “yes” or “no” or stop the sexual activity at any point.

Consent is something that happens the whole way through sex, not just at the beginning. It relies on us not just checking verbally but being aware of our partner’s body language; are they pulling you close, smiling, touching you back, making moves on you too, removing clothes? These are all examples of nonverbal communication that let you know they are into it. If these stop or you aren’t sure they are enjoying it at any point, you need to check.

## The law and sexual violence

Any unwanted or forced sexual act has a huge impact on the victim. When people have been harmed sexually it can affect their lives for years afterwards, so make sure you are treating all your partners with care and respect.

Forced sexual acts are classed as sexual violation under the law, and are a serious crime. If you are charged and found guilty of sexual violation, you can go to prison for up to 20 years.

Even if you know the person or are in a relationship with them, active consent still has to be present.

## If you have been hurt:

If you have been sexually violated – or suspect that someone you know has been – talk to someone you can trust like a family member, teacher, counsellor, doctor, manager or police.

Sometimes it is easier to talk to someone you don’t know. There are organisations throughout the country that can help you. There is help available for any gender, serious and more minor incidents, recent and historic events.

**In New Zealand, a person is unable to legally consent if:**

- they are under 16 years old.
- they are impaired by drugs or alcohol.
- they are saying yes or going along with it because of fear, threats or intimidation, either to them or their friends or family.
- they are mistaken or have been misled about what is happening.
- they are mistaken about the other person’s identity ... Pretending to be an All Black? That’s not consent.
- they have an intellectual, mental or physical condition or impairment that prevents them from giving meaningful consent.

## For more information:

- Safe to Talk **0800 044 334** or text **4334**
- **[www.toah-nnest.org.nz](http://www.toah-nnest.org.nz)** – to find services for help with experiences of sexual violence or concerns about your own behaviour.
- **[www.myrivr.co.nz](http://www.myrivr.co.nz)** – MYRIVR is a downloadable app which lets you search all the different support services available across the country.

## Safe sex

Having sex is one of the most intimate things humans can do, yet we can become shy about asking our partner to practise safe sex. Practising safe sex is important in order to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

You can get STIs if you have unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex or skin on skin contact with someone. The best way to protect yourself and your partner is by using condoms.

Not all STIs have symptoms. Some STIs can be serious and may not go away by themselves, so it is important to be tested and treated if necessary by your doctor.

## Did you know?

Family Planning offer confidential, non-judgmental sexual and reproductive health care. They work with people of any gender, age, nationality or sexual orientation. **[www.familyplanning.org.nz](http://www.familyplanning.org.nz)**

# Porn & sex on the internet

**Did you know that 30 per cent of all internet traffic is porn? That means a lot of porn is being watched.**

Sometimes porn has been a key way people have learnt about sex. The problem is porn is not particularly like real sex.

Porn is like the action movie of sex, you wouldn't learn to drive by watching 'The Fast and The Furious'. Likewise, you want to know the difference between porn sex and real sex.

**Don't feel bad about watching porn but think about:**

How much are you watching?

If you are finding it hard to 'get off' without watching porn, you probably need to cut back.

What sort of porn are you watching?

**Here's a list to get you thinking about the difference between porn and healthy sex in real life.**

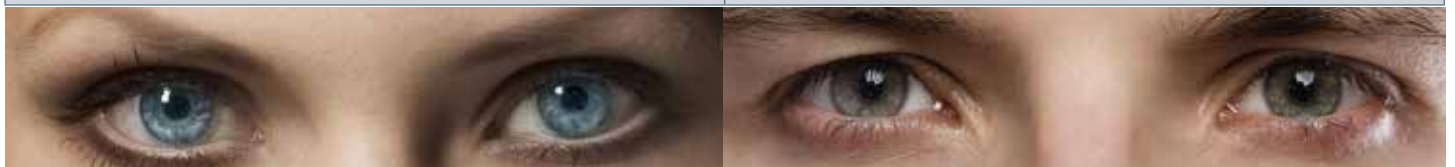
## Ask yourself:


- Are the women and men all having fun?
- Does it show meaningful consent?
- Is the content legal? eg between consenting adults.
- Healthy sex can still involve role playing, but this is different to acts of violence that are not negotiated, safe or consented to. Are you able to tell the difference?
- When you have sex in real life are you clear that it is not going to be a performance like porn?

**Have your radar on about what you are watching and remember porn can be addictive and have disturbing content.**

**If you feel worried about your own porn use, it is ok to ask for help.**

Great sex in real life is...	Sex in porn is...
Done with the other person.	Done to the other person.
About equality, communication and people having fun together.	A performance, with crazy positions, situations and usually plays on power imbalances.
Safe and consensual.	Not about talking about what sort of sex the people want or having safe sex.
At appropriate times when everyone is into it.	Anywhere and everywhere often in unrealistic situations.
About having a level of connection and intimacy – even one-night stands.	Often reduced to being about the man's pleasure and often the connection between the people having sex is missing.
For people with real bodies, hair and all!	Full of giant breasts and penises, totally hairless bodies and never-ending erections. Porn doesn't show what our bodies are like in real life and can create unrealistic expectations.
Always better when there's effort and communication.	Unrealistic. In porn, orgasms particularly for women, are shown as instant, multiple and happening through penetration only. In real life less than 30% of women will orgasm this way and you need to be able to talk to your partner to learn about their body.
Very varied. In real life we have to find people who are compatible with us sexually.	Overestimating what 'normal sex' is. Things like threesomes, anal sex and bondage are common in porn, but these are not things most people have tried. Don't assume these are on the menu without talking to your partner.



A circular arrangement of hands, with fingers pointing towards the center, forming a heart shape. The background is a warm, glowing gradient of yellow and orange, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The hands are light-skinned and appear to be of various ages and genders.

**Anything is  
possible when  
you have the right  
people there to  
support you.**

**Misty Copeland**



 **0800 PLAYER**

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