

Help! My Partner is Threatening Me

"If you don't do what I tell you to do, I'll tell your parents we had sex."

"If you break up with me, I'll post those pictures everywhere..."

If your partner makes threats like this, they are putting you in a tough spot. This type of threat is called blackmail, and you might feel like you have no option but to do what your partner says. Blackmailing is a form of emotional abuse and, like all abuse, is about power and control. A person who uses this tactic wants to make you afraid of some consequence in order to get you to do what they want.

In order for a relationship to be healthy, partners must trust that when they set boundaries and are intimate with each other, both people will uphold those boundaries and neither will attempt to hurt the other partner. Making threats like this is a violation of that trust. Threats are not a sign of love or care, but of manipulation and control.

You never deserve to be threatened and you are never responsible for your partner's choice to be abusive. Unfortunately, that doesn't make dealing with threats like this any easier.

So what can you do if your partner is blackmailing you and trying to get you to do something you don't want to do?

Stand by your boundaries.

If you feel like it is safe for you to resist, your best option might be to stand your ground and not give in to the threats. This is often easier said than done, but giving in to the threats usually doesn't make them stop. In fact, it can intensify your partner's sense of control, and the threats might even become more frequent and extreme in the future.

It is possible that your partner won't follow through on their threats.

However, you know the situation best and talking to a trusted adult or friend may help with these decisions.

Turn to your support system.

A [support system](#) can help you stay strong and feel safe and supported during a difficult time. If you feel safe doing so, let someone in your network – for example, a friend, parent or counselor know what’s going on. You can also call, chat or text with the [Kids Help Phone](#), which is available 24/7.

Save all proof.

If your partner is sending you threats via text, email, social media or voice messages, save everything. [Take a screenshot](#) or [video screen recording](#) and keep them in a safe place, like a password protected file or account, or you could send copies to a trusted friend or family member if your partner has access to your computer or phone. This is a way to document the threats and abuse should you choose to take legal action.

Neutralize the threats.

You may want to consider ways to neutralize the threats that your partner is making. For example, if they are threatening to tell your parents about something you did, you could go to your parents first and be upfront and honest about what happened. It might be an uncomfortable thing to do, but your partner would no longer be able to control you with that threat. Or, maybe your partner is threatening to spread a rumor about you.

If your partner is threatening to out you, you might consider telling your friends or family before your partner has a chance to. This can be a difficult decision to make, because ideally you should be able to come out to people only when you’re ready. You might consider reaching out for support from a local support group or other resource like [QMUNITY](#).

If your partner is threatening to share sexually explicit pictures or other media, there are resources to help. Canada has laws against “revenge porn,” or non-consensual distribution of intimate images (see our section on Distribution of Intimate Images)

No matter the outcome of the situation, it’s important to realize that someone who would make threats like this is not someone you can trust or be in a healthy relationship with, and you should never have to compromise your safety, integrity or privacy to be in a relationship.

You are Not Alone. If you or someone you know thinks they are experiencing digital dating violence, talk with a trusted adult or seek help from one of the organizations listed below to discuss options and create a [safety plan](#). Often digital dating violence may be part of a continuum of gender-based violence that can be both online and in person. There are confidential safe support services available for you.

- [PEACE Program for Children and Youth](#) is counselling program for children and youth experiencing violence.
- [Kid Help Phone](#) crisis line is available 24/7 by call, chat or text.
- [KUU-US Crisis Line Society](#) is a crisis phone line for Indigenous Youth.
- [VictimLink BC](#) is a referral and information service for victims of crime.
- [Society for Children and Youth BC's Child and Youth Legal Centre](#) provides legal support for children and youth.

Spark Teen Digital Dating Violence Project

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