

Learning Solution Interview and Proposal

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## **Problem Interview Summary**

### Target Audience

The person this learning solution is intended for is a 23-year-old female, close relative of mine, who will be referred to as “S.”

### Problem

“S” is currently in a 2-year relationship with a 22-year-old male, who will be referred to as “K.” Based on behaviors, perceptions, and responses, “S” is concerned about the health of the relationship and is not sure if this could be considered an abusive relationship or not.

### Desired State

“S” expressed the desire to learn more about what is considered an emotionally or verbally abusive relationship. She wants to be able to determine for herself if the issues in the relationship are what would be considered normal, are happening because of possible immaturity, are indicators of abuse, or are indicative of something else. She has expressed that her goal is to make an informed decision as to the future of their relationship based on facts, to honestly look at the reality of their situation, and not just react based on her feelings and emotions.

### Interview Summary

When asked to briefly describe her relationship with “K,” “S” indicated that she loved him, and when he was “himself”, he was funny, kind, and loving. However, at any moment, something could be said, or he would get the idea that she was lying or cheating on him, and he would instantly become mean, accusatory, and argumentative. She said, “when everything is normal it’s great, but I also feel like I’m always ‘walking on eggshells’ and don’t know when things are going to flip.”

When asked to give an example of what she means by “when everything is normal,” “S” shared that “K” writes her very sweet notes, he has sent her a heart necklace, he is extremely funny and caring, and she enjoys spending time with him. When asked to give an example of what she means by “when things flip,” “S” shared that one day while they were video chatting on WhatsApp, “K” heard a male voice in the house and began accusing “S” of having a man in her room and cheating on “K.” “S” explained that the male student her mom tutors had just arrived, was definitely not in her room, but was at the dining room table with her mom. “K” did not believe “S” and wanted her to prove it by pointing the camera on her phone around her room and to show him the student was with her mom. “S” indicated that “K” called her several demeaning names while accusing her of cheating.

When asked to describe what she hoped to gain from learning more about the warning signs of potentially abusive relationships, reading about and/or watching real stories associated with relationships, and reflecting on her own experiences, “S” indicated she hoped to honestly look at the facts, compare them to the realities of her own situation, and make an informed decision about the future of her relationship with “K.”

When asked what she meant by “she *hoped* to honestly look at the facts,” “S” hesitated and said, “I don’t know.” When prompted to think about it more and share her thoughts she said, “I just don’t know if I will make a good decision, even if I know what it should be, because I’m not good at making decisions and sticking with them, especially when I let my feelings be in charge. I don’t like making hard decisions, and I tend to let others’ opinions change my mind.” [The “I don’t know” was a red flag. When “S” doesn’t want to deal with difficult situations or answer hard questions, she regularly responds with “I don’t know.” Encouraging her and setting the expectation for her to give an honest answer tends to work.]

## Learning Solution Proposal

### Section 1: Target Audience

The person this learning solution is intended for is a 23-year-old female, close relative of mine, who will be referred to as “S.” “S” is currently in a two-year dating relationship with a 22-year-old male, who will be referred to as “K.” Based on their behaviors, perceptions, and responses, “S” is concerned about the health of the relationship and is not sure if this could be considered an abusive relationship or not. As she shared in the interview, “When everything is normal it’s great, but I also feel like I’m always ‘walking on eggshells’ and don’t know when things are going to flip.”

### Section 2: Cultural Context

“S” and “K” met three years ago while working at a fast food restaurant. They were friends for about a year and began dating two years ago. They have broken up and gotten back together numerous times either due to “S” being indecisive and/or inconsistent in her behaviors and responses or due to “K” being controlling and/or inconsistent in his behaviors and responses. “S” currently lives 8,000 miles away from “K,” but over the past several months they have been planning for “S” to go back to Florida, so that “S” and “K” can move out of their families’ homes and move into an apartment together.

Twice in the last two months, “S” has purchased an airline ticket three weeks prior to her anticipated date to move, and then cancelled the flight reservation within twenty-four hours of her scheduled departure time. The closer it gets their being together, either “S” does a relationship reality check and becomes very indecisive, and/or “K” becomes accusatory and/or exhibits controlling behaviors more often. “S” indicates that as much as she wants to be with “K,” she is also fearful of what it may be like if/when they live together.

Section 3: Gap Analysis

Strategic Objective (SO)	Current Standing (CP)	Deficiency (D)	Action Plan (AP)
1. Research and clearly understand the signs that point to an abusive relationship.	“S” understands what constitutes a physically abusive relationship but is unsure of the warning signs indicating a verbally or emotionally abusive relationship.	“S” is unsure of the (warning) signs indicating a verbally or emotionally abusive relationship.	Provide a list of warning signs for all forms of abusive behaviors. “S” will understand those signs and will note if any of those behaviors have been experienced in her relationship with “K.”
2. Write a journal reflection on the warning signs, if any, determined in the assessment listed in SO 1.	N/A	unknown	“S” will write a journal reflection on the warning signs, if any, determined in the assessment listed in AP 1. She will discuss her findings and reflections with the facilitator.
3. Read about or watch videos of real-life stories as case studies. Determine if each given example exhibits signs of abuse.	“S” would be able to determine if physical abuse has occurred but would be unsure if verbal and/or emotional abuse has occurred.	“S” would be not be able to consistently identify if verbal and/or emotional abuse has occurred.	3. Read about or watch videos real-life stories as case studies. Determine if each example exhibits signs of abuse. In her journal “S” will indicate the following: any signs of abuse, the type with evidence, an action plan to address the abuse, and a personal reflection / response to each case study. “S” will discuss her findings and thoughts regarding those findings with the facilitator.
4. Watch the story of Melissa Dohme from “In An Instant: The Woman Who Refused to Die” and write an in-depth journal reflection.	“S” happened to see this episode. Melissa’s story sparked an awareness within “S” that something may be wrong in her relationship with “K.”	“S” is unsure of the health of her relationship with “K” and has not been ready or willing to assess it with confidence.	“S” will re-watch the story of Melissa Dohme from “In An Instant: The Woman Who Refused to Die.” “S” will write an in-depth journal reflection addressing the

			following: the warning signs of abuse prior to the stabbing in Melissa’s story, if there are any similar warning signs in her relationship with “K”, an action plan for herself if there are warning signs, and how Melissa’s story has impacted her. “S” will discuss her findings and journal reflection with the facilitator.
5. Gain confidence in making an informed decision.	“S” has no confidence in her ability to make a well-informed, firm decision regarding her relationship with “K” and not be swayed by pressure, guilt, or opinions of others.	“S” has no confidence in her ability to make a well-informed, firm decision regarding her relationship with “K” and not be swayed by pressure, guilt, or opinions of others.	“S” will study her journal reflections to determine what path she feels she should take regarding her relationship with “K.” Based on that direction, “S” will make a well-informed and firm decision with confidence.

Section 4: The Learning Solution

The Learning Goals: The Gap Analysis listed above includes the strategic objectives as well as the action plans associated with the proposed learning solution. Overall, “S” needs to gain factual knowledge associated with the warning signs and experiential knowledge associated with others’ stories (i.e. the case studies and Melissa’s story), apply that knowledge to her own experiences, reflect on those experiences, and (with confidence) make a well-informed, firm decision regarding her relationship with “K.”

The Learning Environment: The learning solution will be implemented as a one-on-one, workshop-type setting that ensures confidentiality. This learning experience could take place over the period of one 8-hour workday. Realistically it may be better to separate the learning

solution into multi-hour time chunks and completed over several days, since the subject matter can be emotionally taxing and potentially overwhelming. Breaking it up into smaller chunks of time also gives “S” the chance to reflect more on what she is learning and experiencing once she is outside of the classroom environment.

**The Learning Technique:** While the information, case studies, and Melissa’s story may be accessed online, a facilitator will guide the learning, encourage and support “S”, and promote accountability. An anticipated benefit to this approach is to prepare “S” to be more self-directed as a result of this learning experience. She would also have the tools and resources available to help someone else who may be experiencing similar circumstances.

**The Learning Evaluation:** Since the learning solution incorporates both cognitive and experiential activities, the learning evaluation(s) would need to encompass both of those areas. Based on “S”’s knowledge and application of the warning signs, it would be clear if she understands them and can determine if there is evidence of their existence in any given situation. Experientially, “S” would be able to apply this knowledge to her own circumstances, determine a course of action, and make a firm, unwavering, and confident decision.

#### Section 5: The Influencing Learning Orientations

The learning orientations that would be most appropriate for this learning solution are cognitivism and constructivism. “Cognitively oriented explanations of learning encompass... a common focus on internal mental processes that are under the learner’s control” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 287). In the constructivist approach “learners construct their own knowledge from their experiences.... Aspects of constructivism can be found in transformational learning, experiential learning, ... and reflective practice” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 297).

Regarding a cognitivist orientation, “Bruner... emphasizes learning through discovery... rearranging and transforming evidence in such a way that one is enabled to go beyond the evidence and reconstruct additional insights” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 286). Knowles (1984) states, “Bruner’s instructional theory is based on a theory about the act of learning that involves ‘three almost simultaneous processes: (1) acquisition of new information...; (2) transformation, or the process of manipulating knowledge to make it fit new tasks; and (3) evaluation, or checking whether the way we have manipulated information is adequate for the task’” (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007, p. 286).

With regards to experiential learning, “Kolb (1984) states, ‘Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience’” (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007, p. 161). Regarding Kolb’s four-stage model, McLeod (2017) states, “Effective learning is seen when a person progresses through ... (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then (4) used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.”

Transformational learning is about “dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live ... The mental construction of experience, inner meaning, and reflection are common components of this approach” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 130). Mezirow (2000) describes transformative learning as making our frames of references “more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action... we are freed from uncritical acceptance of others’ purposes, values, and beliefs” (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007, p. 133).



References

McLeod, S. (2017). Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning cycle. *Simply Psychology*.

Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html>

Merriam, S., Caffarella, R., and Baumgartner, L. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.