

Warning Signs Spotlight: Checking Your Phone Without Permission

The beginning of a new relationship can feel like a breath of fresh air. It's a unique time where you learn about your partner, explore each other's wants and needs, and spend quality time together. During this period, you begin building trust and figuring out where the relationship can go in the future. While the ambiguity of a new relationship feels amazing to some people, for others, it can open a sea of insecurities that when left unchecked can become possessive or controlling behaviors. Early signs of dating abuse can be identified through the constant checking of cell phones, social media accounts, text messages, or other online networks without your permission.

Now, you're probably wondering how is checking someone's phone without their permission considered a warning sign for dating abuse? It's not like this is an example of couples getting into physical altercations or making verbal threats to each other. However, the simple act of crossing someone's boundaries by looking at their personal property without permission is what causes these actions to slip into unhealthy relationship territory. Without mutual agreements, a relationship can become one-sided. If your partner doesn't want you to look at their phone or check their social media, that's a boundary you need to accept. They have the right to freedom and space in the relationship, even online!

While respecting our partner's boundaries creates a foundation for a healthy relationship, trusting your partner is the key to success! How many times have we heard the phrase "Relationships are built on trust!"? Even with hearing it often, when it comes to our personal relationships we often forget this concept. If you constantly worry about who your partner is talking to when you're not around, chances are there are some trust issues within the relationship.

How can we address these issues when we're already angry or have additional concerns? The first step is taking a minute to breathe and really analyze the situation. Does it make sense to jump to quick conclusions and demand access to someone's things? Or should you have a conversation about how you're feeling with your partner? Even though it may be uncomfortable at times, we should find a way to communicate our needs. If we know that relationships are built on mutual dignity, respect, and trust, then in theory we shouldn't have to worry about checking our partner's device or social networks. A "Healthy We" is when we are truly respecting each other's boundaries and trusting our partners to do the right thing.

It's Time to Talk

Here are a few questions that parents and caring adults can use to start conversations about checking devices and social media with the young people in their life:

- Would you ever share your Instagram password with your partner? Why or why not?
- Have any of your friends had a partner who wanted to check their phone all the time? What did they do?
- Do any of your favorite TV or movie couples check each other's phones or social media without asking? How did that turn out for them?

What if this happens to me?

If your partner is checking your cell phone and social media without your permission, and you feel safe enough to address it with them, here are a few things you could say:

- I love you, but checking my things without my permission isn't cool.
- It's important that you respect my privacy and trust that I'm being honest with you.
- If you have a question about something you've seen on social media, it would mean a lot if we had a conversation about your concerns instead of looking through my phone or social media without my knowledge.

Remember, you deserve a healthy relationship filled with trust and support! If your partner is constantly pressuring you to share your passwords or just completely bypassing your boundaries and checking your phone without permission, that is unhealthy and potentially abusive behavior. If you notice any of these signs in your relationship and want to talk about it with a peer advocate or if you need help, text “loveis” to 22522 and/or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 520-494-6456 or titleix@centralaz.edu