

PAVE

the Way to Healthy
Relationships



PARENTS ACTIVE IN VIOLENCE
EDUCATION

An Adults Guide to
Understanding Teen Dating
Violence

B.R.A.V.E.

Bystanders Rising
Above Violence
Everywhere



SAFEHOUSE
Survivor Services

OBJECTIVES

- Increase awareness about dating among youth.
- Identify characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Expand understanding the need to preemptively build skills during a child's life to increase healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence in the future.
- Increase adults' skills, comfort and intent to discuss these issues with their youth.

THE PROBLEM

Teen Dating Abuse is a silent epidemic. 1 in 3 teens will experience abuse in a relationship. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention acknowledges that this abuse has serious short term and long term effects on our youth. Dating abuse is physically dangerous and life-threatening, as well as devastating to a young person's mental health. Teens who experience abuse in relationships exhibit higher rates of drug abuse, school drop-out, risky sexual behavior, self-harm, and suicide.

Dating abuse is not solely a female problem or a minority problem. Abuse can happen regardless of age, races nationality economic status, sexual orientation, gender, or religion.

A survey commissioned by Love Is Respect and Liz Claiborne Inc. found that:

- 20% of children between the ages of 11 and 14 say their friends are victims of dating violence,
- 40% of children between the ages of 11 and 14 in relationships know friends who are verbally abused, and
- 34% of teens that are sexually active by age 15 have been physically abused.

THE SOLUTION YOU:

Most teens and adults in abusive relationships will tell no one they are experiencing abuse. If they do confide in someone, it is most likely a friend, not a parent or other adult. They feel that an adult would not understand, or may judge them, or that an adult would not take it seriously. Adults must be willing to take the first step to reach out. Teens actually want to talk about relationships with their parents. 62% say they wish they could talk more openly with their parents about relationships. It is important to model appropriate behavior. To lead by example.

THE DYNAMICS OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

Dating Violence is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of abusive behaviors to maintain power and control over a partner. These behaviors can be physical, mental, emotional, digital, and/or sexual.

Dating violence can be just as serious as domestic violence in adults. It is not about anger management or stress. Abuse often begins lightly and almost playfully and is often disguised by loving actions and words; "I love you so much that it drives me crazy when I see you talking to someone else."

Abuse will intensify and escalate in frequency and severity. Early intervention is vital for both partners.

**Teen
Power &
Control
Wheel**

**Uses
Social Status**

Treats you like a servant. Tells you that you are lucky to have them as a partner. You will be a nobody without them
Threatens to spread rumors and lies about you

**Extreme
Emotions**

Acts extremely jealous when you speak to others, gets angry quickly and violently. Changes from loving to angry and back often.

**Emotional
Abuse**

Always puts you down. Makes you feel badly about yourself. Calls you names. Humiliates you in front of others.

**Minimize/
Deny/Blame**

Makes light of the abuse. Says the abuse didn't happen. Says it is all your fault. Apologizes and expects you to forget the episode.

**Threats and
Intimidation**

Tries to scare you by smashing things, threatens to harm you, your family or friends. Threatens suicide if you leave. Drives the car recklessly to scare you.

Isolates

Limits your outside involvement. Pressures you to choose between them and your friends and family.

**Limits
Independence**

Controls what you wear, where you go and who you see. Makes all the decisions in the relationship.

**Violates
Privacy**

Reads your notes. Goes through your purse, locker, or backpack without permission. Reads your texts and social network sites

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Warning signs will not always be dramatic. It is important to know red flags to help identify abuse before it reaches a dangerous level.

Red Flags to identify victims:

- Changes in appearance (wearing baggy clothes, not wearing make-up anymore)
- Increase in absences
- Stopping extracurricular activities
- Changes in academic performance
- Little social contact; only being with partner
- Unexplained bruising or injuries
- Making excuses or apologizing for partners behavior
- Your child is depressed or has increased anxiety
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Injuries or signs of hiding injuries
- Holes in walls, or signs of struggle
- Dramatic conversations with partner
- An extremely jealous partner
- Excessive texts, emails, or phone calls
- One partner speaks for the other

WHY WOULD THEY STAY?

There are many barriers that teens face when asking for help with an abusive relationship. It is important to remember that victims do not stay because they are stupid or like the abuse. In order to help someone, you must understand their barriers.

LOVE: On the outside, it may be hard to understand that there is love in an abusive relationship. The partners have shared a connection and many good times. These are what the victim holds on to and can be difficult to let go of.

SHAME: "How could I let someone do this to me?" "I am so stupid." These are thoughts that may run through a victim's mind and they may be too embarrassed to admit to the abuse.

DIFFICULT HOMELIFE: Many youth just want to belong and be loved; no matter how they are treated, at least someone does care. Many teens also worry how their parents may react if they find out about the abuse, their sexual activity, or if they are in a same sex relationship.

ISOLATION: Many youth have been pulled away from their support systems. They may believe that no one can help them and no one else cares.

FEAR: The most dangerous time in an abusive relationship is when a victim leaves. The abuser is losing power and control and will threaten the victim's life, the victim's family, friends and pets, or may threaten suicide.

HOW TO INTERVENE

If you suspect your child is involved in an abusive relationship:

- Talk to your child privately about your concerns. Tell him/her what you have seen and that you are concerned about their safety. Point out that the behavior is not normal.
- Be specific in your concerns. Don't just slam their partner, point out behaviors. If you bad mouth the partner, your child will go on the defensive.
- Allow your child to make their own decisions. Be supportive , patient, and understanding. If you force them to break up with their partner, they may go behind your back which puts them in more danger.
- Offer to connect them with helpful resources.
- Do not be judgmental about your child's relationship or choices.
- Do not minimize the abuse or their feelings.
- Do not blame them for their partners actions., "What did you do to make them...?"
- Talk about safety planning.
- Keep lines of communication open.
- Document all dealings with the victim.

SAFETY PLANNING AND INJUNCTIONS

A **safety plan** is unique for each person. It is a set of personalized steps, strategies, and resources that address a victim's safety. This is designed to empower the victim in preparing for an emergency and making safe choices during an abusive relationship and after the relationship ends. Even if they are not ready to end the relationship, it is important to have a safety plan.

The plan covers all areas of their life, school, home, extracurricular activities, work, and social life.

Local domestic violence advocates can assist in creating a safety plan, or the youth may visit:

<http://www.breakthecycle.org/content/safety-planning> to create one at home.

Dating Violence Injunctions:

- If there is or has been a continuing and significant relationship of a romantic or intimate nature within the past six months between the person filing and the person against whom the injunction would be filed.
- The person filing has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming the victim of an act of dating violence.
- The parent or legal guardian of any minor child living at home can file such petition on the minor's behalf to the Clerk of Court if the above criteria are met.

WHEN YOU ARE CONCERNED YOUR YOUTH IS THE ABUSER

Be proud of yourself for recognizing and having concerns about your child's behavior toward their partner.

Here are a few red flags you may observe or overhear:

1. Gets too serious too fast in the relationship.
2. Insults, degrades, or otherwise puts their partner down.
3. Destroys property or punches holes in the wall when angry.
4. Spends all their time with their partner and seems to always know where they are at all times.
5. Is jealous, possessive, and tries to control their partner.
6. Won't accept it when their partner breaks up with them.
7. Uses physical violence in any way: pushing, shoving, grabbing, or hitting.

WHAT TO DO

1. Don't ignore it.

It is hard to think your child is capable of abusing another, but it will not go away on its own. It will get worse and your child deserves to get help.

2. Separate the behavior from the person.

Abuse is a horrible thing. However, if your teen is abusing someone, it does not make them a horrible person. It means your teen has a problem that you need to help them resolve.

3. Try to hear their point of view.

Listen to them, validate their feelings but not the abuse. Hearing their thoughts and feelings is the first step to making changes.

4. Teach them skills to be a better partner.

Focus on empathy, communication and compassion. Teach them about conflict resolution, boundaries, respect and consent.

5. Get professional help.

There is no shame in going to professionals. Changing thoughts, behaviors and actions is not a quick and easy process. It takes time, support and love.

CONVERSATION DO'S AND DONT'S

DO: Be specific about what you saw, and how it made you feel. "I didn't like it when you told your partner they were stupid in front of all of us, and I can only imagine how it made them feel."

DO: Take a stand. "I'm not going to sit here and watch this happen and not say anything about it."

DO: Give them a reality check. Their violent actions will have consequences. "This is a crime, and you could be arrested."

DON'T: Make them feel ashamed of themselves. You care about them, and you want their behavior to change.

As hard as it may be for you, do not support the abuse in any way. You're not turning against your loved one - you're helping them establish a healthy relationship.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST STRATEGY

We know it is not easy to bring up those uncomfortable topics like sex and drugs and drinking and driving. No matter how awkward you think it is, it is better than watching your child suffer because you never had the conversations.

Teachable moments can make these conversations so much better. They are more spontaneous and not like "sit down, we need to have a talk." They also happen more than once, because no one learns everything the first time. These conversations can happen all throughout a child's life from preschool to college and beyond.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE TALK

1. Be there. Be a part of your child's life. Have moments when you are alone together just enjoying each others company.
2. Put them first and put down the technology. Stay away from distractions while you are talking. You expect their undivided attention, shouldn't they have yours?
3. Don't wait. There is never the perfect time. And don't think they will bring it up if they really want to know. They may be waiting for you.
4. Keep it real. Use references they can relate to and make sure it is on their level—but don't try to use their slang and act like a friend. They need you to be an adult, but an adult who gets them.
5. Once is not enough. Have frequent chats with your child about multiple topics. They will know you genuinely care and will be there when they need you.
6. If you don't know, get the info. Your child may ask questions that you do not know the answer to, don't be afraid to let them know. You can research together. If they have a question, answer as honestly as you can .
7. Know when to let go. Not every child will feel comfortable talking to a parent. That can be hard. If this happens, make sure your child knows that if they are not comfortable talking to you, they should find a trusted adult to open up to.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Car rides are perfect opportunities for discussions with youth and their friends. Ask them:

Describe your perfect relationship. How would you treat each other?

Is being in a relationship important to you?

How do you show respect?

How do you feel about partners sharing passwords?

What are your friends relationships like?

Use current media (songs they listen to, shows they watch) and ask them questions about the relationships in those media.

With Elementary youth: Don't say things like, "He pulls your hair because he likes you."

Even young children's shows have relationships in them.

Talk to the child about what they see.

LOCAL RESOURCES

SafeHouse of Seminole

24/7 Helpline 407-330-3933

www.Safehouseofseminole.org

www.weRbrave.com

Domestic and Dating Violence

Victim Service Center

24/7 Helpline 407-500-4325

www.victimservicecenter.org

Assisting all victims of any crime

Florida DV Hotline

1-800-500-1119