

Parent Edition

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE IS REAL ... OUT THERE ... and pervasive.



WHAT IS IT?

- It can be verbal, emotional, sexual, or physical abuse and violence teens experience in dating relationships.

WHO EXPERIENCES THIS?

- Everyone: females, males, heterosexual relationships, and homosexual relationships.
- Boys are more likely to experience being slapped, scratched, pinched, or kicked by their dating partners.
- Girls are more likely to experience psychological abuse, severe violence, sexual violence, and injuries requiring medical attention.
- Dating violence is most common among high school students, but can happen to tweens also, as early as 4th grade.

WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS?

- Individuals, female or male, who desire to control and dominate their victim.
- Boys more often than girls initiate the violence, use greater force, and are repeatedly more abusive to their dating partners.
- Almost 75% of perpetrators were previously victims of dating violence themselves.

WHAT DOES EVIDENCE SAY?

- 24% of tweens report that dating abuse and violence is a serious problem among their age group.
- Over 40% of High School students, both male and female, report having been victims of dating violence at least once.
- 50-80% of teens report they knew of others who were involved in violent relationships.
- 15% of teens, both girls and boys, report being victims of severe violence, which is defined as experiencing being kicked, hit, thrown down, or attacked with a weapon.
- 8% of teens in 8th and 9th grade report having been victims of sexual dating violence.
- 80% of girls who were victims of physical abuse in their dating relationships report continuing to date the abuser.
- More than 70% of pregnant teens are beaten by their boyfriends.

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San Antonio

REALITY: They're not telling us!

REALITY

- Few teens tell their parents or other adults they are experiencing dating violence, some will tell their friends, while others tell no one.
- Research shows that only 32% of teens reported that they would be willing to tell an adult if they experienced teen dating violence (TRU, 2009).

WHY AREN'T TEENS TELLING ADULTS?

- The majority of the youth report that a big reason they don't tell adults about their experience with teen dating violence is because they feel that adults' responses and actions will only make the situation worse.
- Many times teens don't feel adults will understand their situation.
- Teens might experience:
 - Feelings of embarrassment, shame, or confusion about their situation.
 - Threats from their abuser.
 - Fear that the abuser will take revenge if they say something.
 - Fear that their parents will prohibit them from seeing the abuser.
 - Fear punishment, such as the loss of privileges or freedoms (e.g., freedom to go out, get their car taken away, etc.).

BE PROACTIVE!

WARNING SIGNS OF TEENS BEGINNING TO EXPERIENCE DATING VIOLENCE?

- Teens might first experience occasional outbursts they interpret as expressions of passion or attempts to improve the relationship.
- Many teens first feel threatened, criticized, and humiliated by their abusive partners.
- Many teens feel their abusive partner makes them feel:
 - Stupid
 - Incapable
 - Lazy
 - Ugly
 - Worthless
 - Helpless
 - Crazy
 - Trapped

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Many teens experience more than one type of abuse.
- The abuse may happen from time to time or continue day after day.
- Perpetrators may use a variety of techniques to control their victim such as asking them to carry their cell phones with them at all times and answer their calls immediately, etc.
- There tends to be a cycle with the perpetrator falling into a pattern of building tension, erupting with violence, and calming down for a while, then repeating the cycle over again.
- Teens might be in denial of experiencing dating violence.
- Some perpetrators never apologize, but others promise to stop being violent, and bribe their victims with gifts, but then continue their violent behavior.

HOW A VICTIM OF DATING VIOLENCE MIGHT RESPOND:

- Confused about their relationship and their partner's violence.
- Anxious about what will happen to them.
- Unsure how to deal with the relationship.
- Shame because they know it's not right.
- Self-blame thinking it's their fault they're experiencing this.
- Low self-esteem feeling they don't deserve to be treated well.
- Fear of being seriously hurt.
- Fear of becoming pregnant.
- Depressed, helpless, suicidal, and in despair
- Denial regarding their partner's abusive behavior
- Defensive of their partner, trying to protect them
- Turn to alcohol, drugs, or self-mutilation.
- Lonely or isolated from friends and family.

OTHER WARNING SIGNS TO WATCH OUT FOR ARE:

- Girls are more likely to get upset, cry, and fight back.
- Boys are more likely to laugh it off or ignore it.
- Jealous, possessive, controlling, bossy, quick tempered or violent boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Insults, yelling, humiliation, and low-level violence like pushing or pulling hair.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS AND ASK FOR HELP. THERE ARE MANY SERVICES AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HELP:

For emergencies please call 911.

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline:

- loveisrespect.org
- 1-866-331-9474
- 1-866-331-8453 TTY

Bexar County Family Justice Center:

- (210)-208-6800
- <http://www.bcfjc.org/program.html>

Relate Right SA:

- RelateRightSA@live.com
- RelateRightSA.weebly.com

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEENS?

- It is understandable to feel angry, anxious, or shocked that your child is experiencing violence and abuse, but it is important to listen to them and understand and validate their feelings.
- Be patient.
- Offer unconditional support, empathy, and help.

- Remember that:
 - Your teen doesn't have to hate their partner to be safe.
 - Your teen might be in denial of experiencing dating violence, such as by choosing to minimize their abuser's violent behavior.
- Remind your teen:
 - They did the right thing in opening up to you about it.
 - They are NOT worthless, or to blame themselves for what is happening to them. They deserve a healthy relationship.
 - They might be convinced that their partner's bad behavior will stop with apologies, gifts, and promises, but chances are the perpetrator will only start up again the cycle.
 - They might feel they love their abuser and not want to leave them, but the healthiest and safest thing is to end that abusive relationship.
- Provide them with resources they can contact for help.
- Empower them to reach the right decision.

FEELING OVERWHELMED? YOU'RE NOT ALONE, HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- Set some time aside to sit down and talk with your teen, maybe while taking a walk, over ice cream, coffee, or a meal.
- Make sure you hear them out, they have a lot on their chest.
- You can ask them questions about their relationship and see if they show any signs of being in an abusive relationship.
- You can go over some the points on this handout.
- You can create a safety plan with your teen, asking some questions like:
 - Where would you go for help?
 - Who could you call?
 - How would you escape from a violent situation?
 - What precautions can you take to make yourself safer?
 - Come up with a word or phrase you don't typically say that you can say whenever you're in danger, which will let others know to help you, such as
 - "ladybug,"
 - "superman,"
 - "I want pancakes for dinner?"

Notes:
