



Teen Dating Violence Prevention

Teen Dating Violence is a serious problem for today's teenagers. Each year, approximately one in three teens reports being the victim of verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual violence. Abusive relationships can impact adolescent development, and teens who experience dating violence may suffer long-term negative behavioral and health consequences. Adolescents in controlling or violent relationships may carry these dangerous and unhealthy patterns into future relationships.

Technology such as cell phones, email, and social networking websites are sometimes tragically used for control, stalking, and victimization. Emotional abuse through digital technology, including frequent text messages, threatening emails, and the circulation of embarrassing messages or photographs without consent can be devastating to young teens.

Though many communities face the problem of teen dating violence, young people are often afraid to discuss it. In some instances, they may not even recognize the severity of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Parents and other adults can also be uncomfortable with acknowledging that young people experience abuse, or they may even be unaware of its occurrence. The time to break the cycle of teen dating violence is now -- before another generation is victim to this tragedy.

For Teens:

If you are being abused, or are in an abusive relationship:

- **Seek** help NOW! If you don't know what to do, consult a friend, family member, minister/priest, community leader, or the police.
- **Contact** the National Domestic Violence Hotline. This is an anonymous and confidential, 24/7 resource which provides crisis intervention, information and referral to victims of domestic violence, perpetrators, friends and families - to contact the Hotline call 1-800-799-SAFE or visit www.theHotline.org.

If you have a friend who is in an abusive relationship:

- **Support** a friend who is dealing with relationship violence; talking can make an enormous difference to them. They are probably feeling very isolated and alone. When talking with a friend you think might be abused, there are several things to keep in mind:
 - **Listen** to what they have to say and don't be judgmental.
 - **Let** them know you are there whenever they need to talk and that you are worried about them.
 - **Assure** them you won't tell anyone they don't want to know about the situation—and then keep your word (unless you fear for their physical safety).
 - **Be** specific about why you are concerned - "I felt bad when I saw your significant other insult you in front of all of us. They don't have the right to treat you that way. What did you think about it?"
 - **Reassure** your friend that you won't stand by and let the behavior continue.
 - **Find** someone knowledgeable about abuse that they can talk to, and volunteer to go with them.

For Individuals who are Abusers:

- **Understand** how your actions are hurting and dangerous. Most individuals who hurt their significant others don't consider themselves "batterers"—many are in denial about the severity of their actions.
- **Seek** help NOW!! Find someone who is trained to help abusers – counselors, ministers, community members, support groups, etc.

For Individuals who know Abusers:

- **Reach out.** It's hard for us, as their friends, to believe it, too. But reaching out and talking to a friend we think is being violent in their relationship is truly an act of friendship, though it may seem like the hardest thing you can do. Here are some tips to keep in mind:
 - **Be** specific about what you saw and how it made you feel.
 - **Make** sure they realize that their actions have consequences, and they could get into serious trouble—from getting expelled from school to going to jail.
 - **Do not** look the other way if you are aware of someone abusing his or her partner. Urge them to seek help or, if you don't know what to do, consult a friend, family member, community leader or the police.
 - **Let** them know you care, and that you know they have it in them to change.

Families and Communities can:

- **Think** about relationship abuse as a major social problem that touches the lives of teens, men and women of all social, economic and racial backgrounds. Focus on the ways in which you, as an empowered bystander, can support at-risk individuals and confront abusers.
- **Educate** teens, their families and the community about dating violence. It is imperative that we end the cycle of violence present in so many teenage relationships.
- **Provide** information about violence prevention in classrooms, public libraries, and community organizations frequented by children and youth.
- **Be proactive** in assisting community leaders, parents and teachers in understanding the challenges today's adolescents face.
- **Empower** students with leadership development so they can work with adults in their communities, schools and government to eliminate dating violence in all of its forms.
- **Help** to educate and empower girls and boys not to tolerate abuse or sexism. Get involved with youth outreach and mentoring programs in local high schools and middle schools.
- **Speak out** If you suspect that someone you know is being abused. Let them know that the abuse is not their fault, and that they have nothing to be ashamed of. Encourage them to seek help.
- **Know** that while many victims of relationship abuse are female, boys can be emotionally or physically abused as well. Boys can be abused by their girlfriends, and they can also be abused by another boy if they are in a same-sex relationship. Either way, let them know that the abuse is not their fault, and that they have nothing to feel ashamed of. Encourage them to seek help.

- Visit www.NNEDV.org/resources (National Network to End Domestic Violence) to locate your state or territory Domestic Violence Coalition.
- **Familiarize** yourself with the resources in your community including counseling centers and health service organizations. Be a positive resource by sharing information and making appropriate referrals.
- **Support** women and men who are working to end relationship abuse. Get involved with local domestic violence organizations.
- **Encourage** organizations, community groups, communities of faith and others to organize a fundraiser to benefit battered women's shelters and rape crisis centers

Especially for Men (fathers, grandfathers, uncles, older brothers, coaches, teachers, mentors):

- **Approach** relationship abuse as a men's issue; involve men of all social, economic and racial backgrounds. Recognize men not only as perpetrators or potential offenders, but also as bystanders who can confront abusive males, as well as potential victims. **A Call to Men** (www.acalltomen.org), whose vision is to shift social norms that define manhood in our culture, offers 10 things men can do to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- **Play** a crucial role in guiding the boys in your life into manhood and into positive relationships as they grow older—by teaching them about respect, showing them how to deal with conflict, and setting an example of how to build healthy relationships.
- **Utilize** the handbook *Tough Talk-What Boys Need to Know about Relationship Abuse* as an education tool. The handbook includes a clear definition of relationship abuse, as well as practical guidelines and suggested questions for men to formulate a dialogue. By starting a conversation about relationship abuse, your actions demonstrate that this is an issue that can be discussed thoughtfully and openly.

Internet Resources:

<http://loveisnotabuse.com/web/quest/for-adults>

<http://loveisnotabuse.com/web/quest/for-teens>

<http://loveisnotabuse.com/web/quest/for-coaches-fathers-mentors>

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