

Teen Dating Violence

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Part 2



“Unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime.”

~Center for Disease Control and Prevention

It Can Happen to Anyone

Teen dating violence (TDV) is a serious, yet preventable, public health problem in the United States that affects millions of young people. Domestic violence of any kind does not discriminate. People of any race, age, gender, sexuality, religion, education level, or economic status can be a victim or perpetrator. Teen dating violence is a type of domestic violence that occurs between two young people in a close relationship. As with any type of domestic violence, there is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over the other partner.

Dating abuse and violence can evolve slowly, making it difficult to recognize when a relationship has gone from being healthy to unhealthy. Teens often think that some behaviors, like teasing and name-calling, are a “normal” part of a relationship, but these behaviors can become abusive and develop into serious forms of violence. Many teens will not report these unhealthy behaviors because they do not want their family and friends to know about it.

Teen dating violence, like other forms of abuse, can leave lifelong scars on its victims and families of the victims. According to womenshealth.gov, children who are victims of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse are at higher risk for health problems as adults. And when the abuse occurs at the hands of a trusted person, the amount of psychological damage increases.

Conversations surrounding teen dating violence may not be easy, or something that a parent looks forward to. Yet with high rates of dating violence among United States teens, it's a discussion that's crucial for our children. This newsletter includes information, data, and resources to help you better understand teen dating violence.



PREVENTION SERVICES

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1 in 3 girls in the U.S. is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds rates of other types of youth violence.

~ The National Council on Crime and Delinquency

Types of Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence can include any of the following types of behavior:



Physical - when a person deliberately hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force.

Sexual - forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act, sexual touching, or a non-physical sexual event (e.g., sexting) when the partner does not or cannot consent.

Psychological - is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or exert control over another person. This includes threats of violence or property damage, manipulation, yelling, and name-calling.

Stalking - is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone close to the victim. It can include tracking someone's whereabouts without their knowledge.

Teen dating violence can also happen **digitally**. Unwanted, repeated calls and texts, pressure to send private pictures or videos, and posting pictures online without the other partner's consent, are just a few examples of this.

Recognize the Signs

A teen research study revealed that 82 percent of parents reported feeling confident in their ability to recognize abuse signs. However, only 42 percent could accurately identify signs of abuse.

These warning signs of teen dating violence can help you identify whether your teen is in an abusive relationship:

- Your teen's partner behaves in a way that is extremely jealous or possessive, such as checking in on your daughter or son often
- You overhear verbal abuse, such as insults, name-calling, or demeaning comments
- Your teen avoids friends and family, and drops activities or other interests
- Your teen has unexplained injuries
- You notice excessive text messaging, phone calls, or emailing between your teen and their partner
- Your teen's grades are declining or he or she may be missing school more often
- Your teen apologizes or makes excuses for their partner's behavior
- Your teen has become more secretive or withdrawn



Positive relationships with friends, family members, educators, and other trusted adults can both support the development of healthy dating relationships and lower the risk of dating violence.

Consequences of TDV

Teens are heavily influenced by their relationships. Just as healthy relationship behaviors can have a positive effect on a teen’s emotional development, unhealthy, abusive, or violent relationships may also contribute negatively to a teen’s emotional development. Adolescents who experience any form of dating violence are more likely to experience:

- depression and/or anxiety
- poor performance and/or attendance in school
- low participation in school activities
- thoughts of suicide
- problems in non-dating relationships
- drug, alcohol, and tobacco use
- violence in subsequent relationships

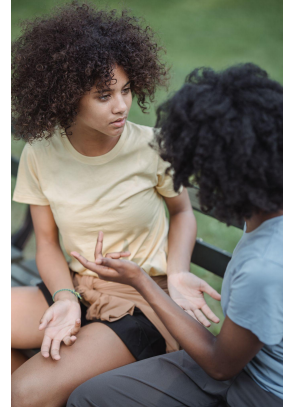
What Can I Do?

If you suspect your teen may be a victim of abuse, you are the most important resource and advisor for you child. According to Impact of the Economy and Parent/Teen Dialogue on Dating Relationships and Abuse, fewer than 1/3 (32%) of teens in an abusive relationship confide in their parents about it. If you suspect your teen is the victim of dating violence, make sure your teen knows you are there to help. Keep the focus on your teen, not the abuser.

Discuss Boundaries. Digital, physical, financial, and emotional boundaries are necessary to have a healthy and balanced relationship. Explain to your teen that these personal parameters may seem like they hinder a relationship, but they actually lay the groundwork for respectful and healthy partnerships. Everyone has the right to create boundaries, which may change throughout the relationship.

Tell Your Teen That You are Concerned for His or Her Safety. Point out that what is happening is not normal. Remind your teen that he or she deserves a violence-free relationship and that abuse is NEVER appropriate and NEVER their fault.

Be Supportive and Understanding. Stress to your teen that you are on his or her side, and make it clear that you don’t blame your teen and that you respect his or her choices. Provide information and non-judgmental support. Offer to connect your teen with a professional, such as a counselor who will keep conversations confidential. Furthermore, if need be, contact law enforcement.



February 2024

National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM). This issue impacts teens, as well as their parents, teachers, friends and communities. By increasing awareness about teen dating violence, TDVAM promotes safe, healthy relationships.

Youth.Gov TDV Awareness Month

Resources

You are your child’s most important source of support and information. The resources below will help you learn more about teen dating violence.

- [CDC Teen Dating Violence Fast Facts](#)
- [Futures Without Violence](#)
- [One Love Foundation](#)
- [US Dept of Justice TDV Dating Matters](#)

The Youth Council of love and respect chose “Love Like That” as the 2024 TDVAM theme to illuminate what “that” means regarding healthy and unhealthy relationships. The organization [love is respect](#) is a project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and offers information and support for young people between the ages of 13 and 26. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1-866-331-9474



PREVENTION SERVICES

PERSONAL | PASSIONATE | PROGRESSIVE

Visit our [Prevention Services](#) web page for additional prevention resources.

